KHADI

[Hand-Spun Cloth]

WHY AND HOW

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By

M. K. GANDHI

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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD

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By

M. K. GANDHI

Edited by

BHARATAN KUMARAPPA

NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
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EDITOR'S NOTE

A very important, if not the most important, item in Gandhiji's programme for national reconstruction, was his movement for hand-spinning and weaving. He saw in it the revival of the entire economic, social and cultural life of the villages which constitute our country.

As against this, many even today wrongly imagine that Gandhiji's movement for reviving hand-spinning had nothing but a political motive. It was, according to them, his non-violent way of striking at the roots of the British Empire. Britain had taken possession of India, stifled her ancient handicrafts and village industries, in order that her own factories may thrive. So, such persons think that Gandhiji started his Khadi programme to make it impossible, to some extent at least, for Britain to derive economic profit from holding India. Consequently they argue that now that we have won our political freedom from Britain, there is no further need for Khadi.

If this were the significance of Gandhiji's movement for Khadi, then there was no reason why he insisted only on Khadi, and not also on mill-cloth. For by manufacturing cloth also with the aid of mills, we could have produced much more quickly all the cloth we needed, and hastened the achievement of political independence. Further, the fact that Gandhiji did not advocate boycott of British cloth as such, but only boycott of all foreign cloth, shows that he did not conceive of his Khadi movement as aiming merely at British rule, but at making our people economically self-dependent. He realized, of course, that by making us economically independent, Khadi would help in hastening the achievement of political freedom. But its significance was not merely political for him. He saw in it much deeper and more permanent meaning.

Thus, for instance, he wanted our people by hand-spinning to shake off inertia and a feeling of helplessness, and to learn to rely on themselves. Mill production of cloth could not secure this as, in the first place, mills could employ only a small fraction of the people ; and, in the second place, in mill production the employee could not be self-reliant, as he was dependent on the employer for wages, raw materials and machinery. It was Khadi alone which could teach our village population to depend on their own efforts to improve their lot, and thus to learn their first lesson in real independence. Khadi, therefore, had for Gandhiji not merely an economic significance, but also great cultural or psychological value. It was meant to put new life into the individual and to make him resourceful and self-dependent. As such, it contained the seeds of true Swaraj or self-rule, or democracy in the real sense of the term.

Secondly, in a country like ours, where people shunned manual labour and thought it degrading, Gandhiji felt that hand-spinning when universalized would teach our population, high and low, the dignity of hand-labour.

Thirdly, with our aristocratic traditions, fostered by a degenerate form of the caste system and by the British system of education, there grew up a big gulf between the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated. If hand-spinning were carried on by all, this gulf would be bridged, and in its place would be established a bond of unity between the classes and masses, and between all castes and creeds. This was the great social value Gandhiji saw in hand-spinning.

Fourthly, Gandhiji realized that industrialism, with its need for raw materials and markets, led to imperialism, international strife and war. Khadi, on the other hand, was an attempt to revive the old self-sufficient village economy, where production would be restricted primarily to the needs of the village. In this case, there would be no incentive to grab other countries for raw materials and markets. Without rooting out thus the cause of international friction

in the economic sphere, achievement of world peace seemed to him an idle dream.

It was for weighty reasons such as these — economic, cultural and social, and not merely political — that Gandhiji established his Khadi movement. He did not mean by it merely to serve the temporary purpose of wresting power from Britain, but he expected by it to lay the foundations of a non-violent economic and social order which would bring peace and happiness both to us and to all mankind. This was the far-reaching and permanent objective which underlay his efforts for reviving Khadi.

Gandhiji started his movement for Khadi in 1918. His emphasis at first was on Khadi as providing relief to our poverty-stricken masses. But one finds a change in his emphasis from 1934, more especially from 1935, when he began insisting on Khadi for the villager's own use, rather than merely for sale to others. His imprisonment in 1942 and 1943 gave him time to ponder further over his Khadi movement, and when he came out of jail he came with a determination to give a new turn to Khadi work in order to make Khadi serve the needs of villagers themselves first and foremost. He poured out his soul to his fellow-workers in 1944, and urged them to effect the change. We are indebted to Swami Anand for the notes he took at the time. These have been translated into English by Shri Suresh Ramabhai and revised by Shri N. Ramaswami. We have edited them and included them here as Section XIII. This is the first time that they appear in English. This and the following Section are most important as indicating the lines along which Gandhiji wanted Khadi work to develop in the future.

During a period of almost thirty years Gandhiji wrote much on Khadi. We could include here only some of his writings and reports of his speeches and conversations on the subject. But we have tried not to omit anything of importance, and to present to the reader as comprehensive an account as possible, of Gandhiji's views on his Khadi

movement, and in his own words. The arrangement in chapters, and in many cases the titles of articles are ours.

An earlier volume entitled *Economics of Khadi*, giving Gandhiji's writings on Khadi in chronological order, was published by the Navajivan Trust in 1941. The present volume includes most of that matter but re-arranged according to topics, and brought up-to-date to include also Gandhiji's later writings and speeches on Khadi.

In compiling this volume the needs of Khadi workers and students qualifying for village work have been more especially kept in mind. But the book should be useful also to all those interested in Gandhiji's views in regard to national reconstruction, and especially in regard to the place which hand-spinning and hand-weaving should occupy in plans for improving the condition of our people.

Bombay, October, 1955 Bharatan Kumarappa

NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH THEIR MEANINGS

Ahimsa — non-violence ; love
Ashram — a place for spiritual retirement ; Gandhiji's colony of workers
Bhandar — shop
Brahmachari — one who practises chastity
Brahmacharya — chastity ; continence
Chakki — grinding stone rotated by hand
Charkha — spinning wheel
Charkha Sangh — Spinners' Association
Crore — ten millions
Daman — the thick cord that rotates the large wheel of the Charkha
Daridranarayan — God in the form of the poor
Dhenki — mortar and pestle for hand-pounding of grain
Dhoti — loose cloth worn round the waist by men
Ghani — village oil-press worked by a bullock
Ghataka — mediator ; match-maker
Goseva Sangh — Association for the welfare of cattle
Gud — unrefined brown product used in the place of sugar
Harijan — lit. people of God ; Gandhiji's term for 'untouchables'
Harijan Sevak Sangh — Association for the welfare of 'untouchables'
Hindustani Talimi Sangh — Association for spreading the New Education advocated by Gandhiji
Kasturba Trust — Association for the welfare of women and children in the villages
Khaddar / *Khadi* — hand-spun, hand-woven cloth
Lakh — one hundred thousand
Mal — the thin string that goes over the spindle
Mandal — club
Mohalla — part of a town

Nai Talim — New Education as advocated by Gandhiji
Odhni — cloth thrown over the head and shoulders by women
Pachhedo — a half-sari pleated over a skirt
Pandit — learned man
Ramanama — the name of God
Sangh — Association
Sari — loose cloth wrapped round the body by women
Shraddha — ceremony in celebration of the death anniversary of a loved one
Sowcar — money-lender
Swadeshi — loyalty to one's neighbours; duty to patronize goods produced in one's neighbourhood
Swaraj — self-government
Takli — spindle used in hand-spinning without the aid of the spinning wheel
Taluka — a group of villages forming an administrative unit
Tapashcharya — penance; voluntary suffering
Tehsil — an administrative unit consisting of a group of villages
Tola — two and a half tolas equal one ounce in weight
Tunai — hand-carding
Vidyalaya — school

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INTRODUCTORY

HOW I DISCOVERED THE SPINNING WHEEL

It was in London in 1908 that I discovered the wheel. I had gone there leading a deputation from South Africa. It was then that I came in close touch with many earnest Indians—students and others. We had many long conversations about the condition of India, and I saw as in a flash that without the spinning wheel there was no Swaraj. I knew at once that everyone had to spin. But I did not then know the distinction between the loom and the wheel, and in *Hind Swaraj* used the word loom to mean the wheel.

Though the wheel was discovered to the mental vision in 1908, it saw work only in 1918, after three years' patient and strenuous effort. The first Khadi vow (very much adulterated to suit the fashionable sisters of Bombay) was taken in 1919. The wheel found a place in the Congress programme in 1921. The history of the movement since then is an open book, still being written in the lives of the two thousand odd organizers and nearly seventy thousand spinners in whose lives the wheel has brought a ray of hope.

Young India, 20-9-'28

I first became a weaver in 1915. I became first a weaver and then a spinner. I have woven with these very hands both foreign yarns and our mill yarns. As I was sitting at my handloom weaving cloth, I was considering for myself where I should be and where thousands and tens of thousands of weavers would be when mills were organized enough to weave that kind of cloth themselves. And as I was thinking of this thing my heart went out to the millions of starving sisters in our villages, and I began, as I was weaving, to think of the lot of these sisters. I became sad and disconcerted, and together with my companions I began a diligent search for some spinner who would teach us hand-spinning, and I began also to see whether

there was a single village where I could find hand-spinning still going on. I knew nothing then of the fact that there were some sisters spinning in the Punjab. But as despair was creeping over me, I took shelter under a brave widow of Gujarat. She was working in the cause of 'untouchables'. I shared this deep sorrow of mine with this great sister, and I charged her to wander from place to place in Gujarat and not rest content till she had found those sisters, who still had the art of hand-spinning in their possession. And it was she who discovered at Vijapur in Gujarat a few Mussalman sisters who were prepared to spin if she would take their yarn from their hands. From that moment began the great revival which is now covering over fifteen hundred villages in India. And it was after this discovery that I decided not to weave a single thread of foreign yarn or mill-spun yarn in the Ashram of which I happened to be in charge.

Young India, 13-10-'27

SECTION ONE: WHY SPINNING

1

TO RELIEVE POVERTY

I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago, and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to reintroduce spinning in their homes and every village must repossess its own weaver.

Young India, 21-7-'20

I would favour the use of the most elaborate machinery, if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness be avoided. I have suggested hand-spinning as the only ready means of driving away penury and making famine of work and wealth impossible. The spinning wheel itself is a piece of valuable machinery, and in my own humble way I have tried to secure improvements in it in keeping with the special conditions of India. The only question, therefore, that a lover of India and humanity has to address himself to is how best to devise practical means of alleviating India's wretchedness and misery.

If he would visualize the picture of the Indian skeleton, he must think of the eighty per cent of the population which is working its own fields, and which has practically no occupation for at least four months in the year, and which therefore lives on the borderland of starvation. This is the normal condition. The ever recurring famines make a large addition to this enforced idleness. What is the work that these men and women can easily do in their own

cottages so as to supplement their very slender resources? Does any one still doubt that it is only hand-spinning and nothing else?

Young India, 3-11-'21

Cottage manufacture of yarn and cloth cannot be expensive even as domestic cookery is not expensive and cannot be replaced by hotel cookery. Over twenty-five crores of the population will be doing their own hand-spinning and having yarn thus manufactured woven in neighbouring localities. This population is rooted to the soil, and has at least four months in the year to remain idle.

If they spin during those hours and have the yarn woven and wear it, no mill-made cloth can compete with their Khadi. The cloth thus manufactured will be the cheapest possible for them.

Young India, 8-12-'21

What is claimed for spinning is that:

1. It supplies the readiest occupation to those who have leisure and are in want of a few coppers;
2. it is known to the thousands;
3. it is easily learnt;
4. it requires practically no outlay of capital;
5. the wheel can be easily and cheaply made. Most of us do not yet know that spinning can be done even with a piece of tile and splinter;
6. the people have no repugnance to it;
7. it affords immediate relief in times of famine and scarcity;
8. it alone can stop the drain of wealth which goes outside India in the purchase of foreign cloth;
9. it automatically distributes the millions thus saved among the deserving poor;
10. even the smallest success means so much immediate gain to the people;
11. it is the most potent instrument of securing co-operation among the people.

The difficulties in the way are want of faith among the middle classes which alone can supply the required number of workers. The greater difficulty still is the disinclination of the people to take to Khadi in the place of the fine-looking mill-made cloth. The dearness of Khadi during the transition stage is an additional difficulty. If the people respond to the spinning resolution in sufficient numbers, Khadi can be made to compete with mill-made cloth. There is no doubt that the movement does require for its success a little sacrifice on the part of the people. Even this direct sacrifice will not be necessary if we had our own Government mindful of the wants of the peasants and determined to protect them against foreign competition. Voluntary sacrifice for a time by the middle class can do what the Government would do if it was national.

There is no question of waste of energy. Have the thousands of our sisters, to whom Dr. Ray was previously giving doles of charity and is now giving honourable employment and making them partly or wholly self-supporting, wasted their energy? They have no other occupation save that of begging or starving. Is it waste of energy for young men to be going to the villages, studying their wants, feeling for them and helping them onward? Is it waste of energy for thousands of well-to-do young men and women to think of the poor half-fed millions and for their sake to set apart half an hour religiously to spinning on their behalf? If one man or woman spins for a few pice when he or she has no other occupation, it is so much gain; if one man or woman spins as a sacrifice, it is also so much gain. If there is one activity in which it is all gain and no loss, it is hand-spinning.

Young India, 21-8-'24

The disease of the masses is not want of money so much as it is want of work. Labour is money. He who provides dignified labour for the millions in their cottages, provides food and clothing, or which is the same thing, money. The *charkha* provides such labour. Till a better substitute is found, it must, therefore, hold the field.

Young India, 18-6-'25

Idleness is the great cause, the root of all evil, and if that root can be destroyed, most of the evils can be remedied without further effort. A nation that is starving has little hope or initiative left in it. It becomes indifferent to filth and disease. It says of all reforms, 'to what good?' That winter of despair can only be turned into the 'sunshine of hope' for the millions only through the life-giving wheel, the *charkha*.

Young India, 27-8-'25

Do you know the daily income per head of our country? Our economists say that it is one anna and six pies, though even that is misleading. If someone were to work out the average depth of a river as four feet from the fact that the river was six feet deep in certain places and two feet in others, and proceeded to ford it, would he not be drowned? That is how statistics mislead. The average income is worked out from the figures of the income of the poor man as also of the Viceroy and the millionaires. The actual income will, therefore, be hardly three pice per head. Now if I supplement that income by even three pice with the help of the *charkha*, am I not right in calling the *charkha* my cow of plenty? If someone convinces me today that there is no poverty in India, that there are few in India who starve for want of even a few pice a day, I shall own myself to have been mistaken and shall destroy the spinning wheel.

Young India, 17-3-'27

The cardinal facts to realize are that there is already terrible forced unemployment among the toiling millions in that they have no work for at least four months in the year. Once that is realized, surely it follows that not a moment should be lost in bringing work to these millions so as to utilize their idle hours. The other fact to realize is that, if the average income of the inhabitant of this land is seven pice per day, i.e. less than two English pennies per day, at the present rate of exchange, the average income of the toiling millions must *ipso facto* be much less.

He who adds two pice per day to their income, and that without any great capital outlay, makes a princely addition to their income, and in addition revives the dying hope within the breasts of these millions.

Young India, 1-11-'28

The only objection that has been urged by its critics is that the wheel does not pay. But even if it pays only one pice per day, it does pay when we remember that our average income is six pice per day against the fourteen rupees and six rupees per day respectively of the average American and the average Englishman. The spinning wheel is an attempt to produce something out of nothing. If we save sixty crores of rupees to the nation through the spinning wheel, as we certainly can, we add that vast amount to the national income. In the process we automatically organize our villages. And as almost the whole of the amount must be distributed amongst the poorest of the land, it becomes a scheme of just and nearly equal distribution of so much wealth. Add to this the immense moral value of such distribution, and the case for the *charkha* becomes irresistible.

Young India, 17-2-'27

2

SPINNING AS AN AID TO HARIJANS

During my peregrinations I have observed that spinning and weaving are among the industries that are supporting thousands of Harijans and, if properly organized, can support many more. Indeed, in some places, there are to be found weavers who are classed as untouchables on account of their occupation. They are mostly weavers of coarsest Khadi without any pattern. This class was fast dying out when Khadi came to the rescue and there was created a demand for their coarse manufacture. It was then discovered that there were numerous Harijan families that even subsisted on spinning. Thus Khadi is doubly

the poor man's staff of life. It helps the poorest, including the Harijans, who are the most helpless among the poorest. They are so because many occupations which are available to the others are not available to the Harijans.

Harijan, 27-4-'34

3

THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF SPINNING

All the evidence hitherto collected goes to show that spinning is an elegant art and that the process itself is extremely pleasant. No mechanical pull is enough to draw the various counts. And those who do spinning as an art know the pleasure they derive when the fingers and the eyes infallibly guide the required count. Art to be art must soothe. I reproduced over a year ago the testimony of Sir Prabhashankar Pattani to show how after the day's trying work he went to the *charkha* for soothing his nerves and giving him undisturbed sleep. I extract the following passage from the letter of a friend who found solace for her shattered nerves in spinning :

"When.....I hastened to my room and then in the dark struggled with an anguish which rent me from top to toe, I prayed and strove for some time and then turned to the spinning wheel and found in it a magical comfort. The quiet regular motion of its rhythm immediately steadied me and the thought of its service brought me nearer to God."

This is not the solitary experience of one or two but of many spinners. It is, however, no use saying that spinning will be pleasurable to all because it has been the joy of many. Painting is acknowledged to be an exquisite art, but it is not everybody who takes to it.

Young India, 27-5-'26

"Have you thought of the *charkha* as a therapeutic agent ?" asked Mr. Freeman of the *New York Post*.

"Yes," replied Gandhiji. "I have read some literature on the subject sent to me by a Glasgow professor. A retired Superintendent of a jail in Bengal too wrote to

me describing the use of the spinning wheel for curing lunatics, particularly by virtue of the soothing effect of its rhythmic motion."

"I propose to interpret the *charkha* to Americans as a 'thinking machine'," remarked Mr. Freeman. "I found while I was attending my spinning class that if alone with it, it made me think. If only Americans could get down to spin they might be able to do some thinking for which otherwise they get no time."

Harijan, 17-11-'46

4

SPINNING AND BRAHMACHARYA

To those also who aspire to observe *brahmacharya* I present the spinning wheel. It is not a thing to be despised, for it is experience here that speaks. A person who wants to subdue his passions has need to be calm. All commotion within him ought to cease; and so quiet and gentle is the motion of the spinning wheel that it has been known to still the passions of those who have turned it in the fullness of faith. I have been able to compose my anger by turning it, and I can adduce similar testimony of several other *brahmacharis*. Of course it would be quite easy to laugh down all such persons as fools and nincompoops, but it would not be found to be cheap in the end. For the scoffer in a fit of anger loses a beautiful means wherewith to compose his passions and attain vigour and strength. I therefore particularly recommend to every young man and young woman who reads these lines to give the spinning wheel a trial. They will find that shortly after they sit down to spin their passions begin to subside. I do not mean to say that they would remain calm for all the rest of the day even after the spinning is discontinued; for human passions are fleeter even than the wind, and to subdue them completely requires no end of patience. All that I claim is that in the spinning wheel they will find a powerful means of cultivating steadiness.

Young India, 27-5-'26

5

SPINNING AS CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT

Spinning would spell the organization of crores into a joint co-operative effort, the conservation and utilization of the energy of the millions, and the dedication of crores of lives to the service of the motherland. The carrying out of such a gigantic task would, further, give us a realization of our own strength. It would mean our acquiring a thorough mastery of the detail and innumerable knotty problems which it presents, e.g. learning to keep account of every pie, learning to live in the villages in sanitary and healthy conditions, removing the difficulties that block the way and so on. For, unless we learn all this, we would not be able to accomplish this task. The spinning wheel, then, provides us with a means for generating this capacity in us.

Young India, 27-5-'26

In speaking to a co-operative society in Madras last year I said that through handspinning I was trying to found the largest co-operative society known to the world. There must be co-operation from the very commencement.

Take the working of a typical centre. At the central office is collected seed cotton for spinners. The cotton is ginned by ginners perhaps at the centre. It is distributed then among carders who re-deliver it in the shape of slivers. These are now ready to be distributed among the spinners who bring their yarn from week to week and take away fresh slivers and their wages in return. The yarn thus received is given to weavers to weave and received back for sale in the shape of Khadi. This latter must now be sold to the wearers — the general public. Thus the central office has to be in constant living human touch with a very large number of people irrespective of caste, colour or creed. For the centre has no dividends to make, has no exclusive care but the care of the most needy.

The centre to be useful must keep itself clean in every sense of the term. The bond between it and the component parts of the vast organization is purely spiritual or moral. A spinning centre, therefore, is a co-operative society whose members are ginners, carders, spinners, weavers, and buyers — all tied together by a common bond, mutual goodwill and service.

Young India, 10-6-'26

6

SPINNING AS THE ONLY UNIVERSAL INDUSTRY

By a process of exclusion one arrives at the irresistible conclusion that the only universal industry for the millions is spinning and no other. That does not mean that other industries do not matter or are useless. Indeed from the individual standpoint any other industry would be more remunerative than spinning. Watch-making will be no doubt a most remunerative and fascinating industry. But how many can engage in it? Is it of any use to the millions of villagers? But if the villagers can reconstruct their home, begin to live again as their forefathers did, if they begin to make good use of their idle hours, all else, all the other industries will revive as a matter of course. We make little headway because we have an unclassified catalogue of industries for the people to choose, when we should know that there is only one industry it is possible to put before all. They may not all take it up. Let those who can and wish to, by all means, take up any other. But national resources must be concentrated upon the one industry of hand-spinning which all can take up now and besides which the vast majority can take up no other.

Young India, 30-9-'26

Khadi is the symbol of self-help, self-reliance and freedom not merely of individuals or groups, sects or clans, but of the whole nation. It is a movement in which the prince and the pauper, men and women, boys and girls,

Hindus and Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis and Jews, Englishmen, Americans and Japanese, if they wish well to India and get rid of the spirit of exploitation, can also take part. Thus it is a unique movement. It is good not merely for some, not merely for a vast majority, but it is good for all.

Young India, 10-2-'27

7

SPINNING TO TEACH DIGNITY OF LABOUR

The more I penetrate the villages, the greater is the shock delivered as I perceive the blank stare in the eyes of the villagers I meet. Having nothing else to do but to work as labourers side by side with their bullocks, they have become almost like them. It is a tragedy of the first magnitude that millions have ceased to use their hands as hands. Nature is revenging herself upon us with terrible effect for this criminal waste of the gift she has bestowed upon us human beings. We refuse to make full use of the gift. And it is the exquisite mechanism of the hands that among a few other things separates us from the beast. Millions of us use them merely as feet. The result is that she starves both the body and the mind.

The spinning wheel alone can stop this reckless waste. It can do that now and without any extraordinary outlay of money or intelligence. Owing to this waste, we are living in a state almost of suspended animation. It can be revived if only every home is again turned into a spinning mill and every village into a weaving mill. With it will at once revive the ancient rustic art and the rustic song. A semi-starved nation can have neither religion nor art nor organization.

Young India, 17-2-'27

Khadi has a big mission. Khadi provides dignified labour to the millions who are otherwise idle for nearly

four months in the year. Even apart from the remuneration the work brings, it is its own reward. For, if millions live in compulsory idleness, they must die spiritually, mentally and physically. The spinning wheel automatically raises the status of millions of poor women. Even though, therefore, mill cloth were to be given gratis to the people, their true welfare demands that they should refuse to have it in preference to Khadi, the product of their labours.

Harijan, 10-12-'38

8

SPINNING FOR REVIVAL OF VILLAGES

The spinning wheel represents to me the hope of the masses. The masses lost their freedom, such as it was, with the loss of the *charkha*. The *charkha* supplemented the agriculture of the villages and gave it dignity. It was the friend and solace of the widow. It kept the villagers from idleness. For the *charkha* included all the anterior and posterior industries — ginning, carding, warping, sizing, dyeing and weaving. These in their turn kept the village carpenter and the blacksmith busy. The *charkha* enabled the seven hundred thousand villages to become self-contained. With the exit of the *charkha* went the other village industries, such as the oil press. Nothing took the place of these industries. Therefore the villages were drained of their varied occupations and their creative talent and what little wealth these brought them.

The analogy of the other countries in which too village handicrafts were destroyed will not serve us because, whereas the villagers there had some compensating advanlages, India's villagers had practically none. The industrialized countries of the West were exploiting other nations. India is herself an exploited country. Hence, if the villagers are to come into their own, the most natural thing that suggests itself is the revival of the *charkha* and all it means.

This revival cannot take place without an army of selfless Indians of intelligence and patriotism working

with a single mind in the villages to spread the message of the *charkha* and bring a ray of hope and light into their lustreless eyes. This is mighty effort at co-operation and adult education of the correct type. It brings about a silent and sure revolution like the silent but sure and life-giving revolution of the *charkha*.

Twenty years' experience of *charkha* work has convinced me of the correctness of the argument here advanced by me. The *charkha* has served the poor Muslims and Hindus in almost an equal measure. Nearly five crores of rupees have been put into the pockets of these lakhs of village artisans without fuss and tomtoming.

Hence I say without hesitation that the *charkha* must lead us to Swaraj in terms of the masses belonging to all faiths. The *charkha* restores the villages to their rightful place and abolishes distinctions between high and low.

Harijan, 13-4-'40

9

SPINNING AS AN EMBLEM OF NON-VIOLENCE

In 1919 the lovers of the liberty of India were introduced to non-violence as the only and sure means to Swaraj and to the *charkha* as a symbol of non-violence. The *charkha* found its proud place on the national flag in 1921. But non-violence had not gone deep into the heart of India, and so the *charkha* never came into its own. It will never come into its own unless the vast body of Congressmen develop a living faith in non-violence. When they do so they will, without needing any argument, discover for themselves that there is no other symbol of non-violence than the *charkha*, and that without its universalization there will be no visible expression of non-violence.

Harijan, 13-4-'40

The spinning wheel is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth but of goodwill and

self-help. It will not need the protection of a navy threatening a world's peace and exploiting its resources, but it needs the religious determination of millions to spin their yarn in their own homes as today they cook their food in their own homes. I may deserve the curses of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its blessings for suggesting a revival of the *charkha*. I stake my all on it. For every revolution of the wheel spins peace, goodwill and love.

Young India, 8-12-'21

It is my claim that (by reviving Khadi and other village industries) * we shall have evolved so far that we shall remodel national life in keeping with the ideal of simplicity and domesticity implanted in the bosom of the masses. We will not then be dragged into an imperialism which is built upon exploitation of the weaker races of the earth, and the acceptance of a giddy materialistic civilization protected by naval and air forces that have made peaceful living almost impossible. On the contrary we shall then refine that imperialism into a commonwealth of nations which will combine, if they do, for the purpose of giving their best to the world and of protecting, not by brute force but by self-suffering, the weaker nations or races of the earth. Such a transformation can come only after the complete success of the spinning wheel. India can become fit for delivering such a message, when she has become proof against temptation and therefore attacks from outside, by becoming self-contained regarding two of her chief needs — food and clothing.

Young India, 29-6-'21

" Has the spinning wheel a message for America ? Can it serve as a counter-weapon to the atom bomb ? ", asked Mr Andrew Freeman of the *New York Post*.

" I do feel," replied Gandhiji, " that it has a message for the U.S.A. and the whole world. But it cannot be until India has demonstrated to the world that it has made the spinning wheel its own, which it has not done today. The

* Words in brackets are ours. —Ed.

fault is not of the wheel. I have not the slightest doubt that the saving of India and of the world lies in the wheel. If India becomes the slave of the machine, then, I say, heaven save the world."

"India," he continued, "has a far nobler mission, viz. to establish friendship and peace in the world. Peace cannot be established through mere conferences. Peace is being broken, as we all see, even while conferences are being held."

"As a fairly intelligent human being and an American I can only say," remarked Mr Freeman, "that though many Americans would call spinners cranks, there are not a few who are thinking hard. Something has to be found that would save civilization from destruction. Life must be simplified."

"Human personality cannot be sustained in any other way," replied Gandhiji. "I stand by what is implied in the phase, 'Unto This Last'. That book * marked the turning point in my life. We must do even unto this last as we would have the world do by us. All must have equal opportunity. Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth. That is what the spinning wheel symbolizes."

"Would you like the American to take to the spinning wheel?" he again asked.

"Yes," replied Gandhiji. "But I do not know whether it will be taken up by anybody before it is well established here. If, on the other hand, India adopts it for clothing itself, I would not need to tell the world. It will adopt it of itself. Today there is such an onslaught on India of Western machinery that for India to withstand it successfully would be nothing short of a miracle. I must confess that today everything seems to point to the contrary."

"But you have not given up hope?"

"I cannot so long as I have faith in that living Power who is more with us than we know."

Harijan, 17-11-'46

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* John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*.

SECTION TWO: WHY NOT INDUSTRIALISM

10

CAN WE AVOID INDUSTRIALISM?

The following extract from a letter of a passionate lover of Khaddar will be read with interest:

> "I believe in Khaddar. I see the mission of Khaddar clear as crystal. It simplifies and hence purifies life. It binds us to the poor by the tie of service. It is the only insurance against poverty which is killing the body and the soul of the nation, for at least as far as the illiterate millions are concerned there is no question of the soul without the body. Realized Yoga and its votaries might talk of it, but for the millions the soul is mockery without the body. Last and not least, the *charkha* is the only insurance against violent social outbreaks as are now flooding Europe with blood and passions. The *charkha* brings the masses and the classes together, and as long as India accepts it Bolshevism and kindred violent eruptions would be impossible. These things convince me of the vital need of the *charkha*. But there is only one difficulty. Can it work? Can it succeed? Can we now plant again the *charkha* in its old place of sanctity in every home? Is it not too late? And there is Bertrand Russell who says that industrialism is like a force of Nature, and India too will be submerged whether we want it or no. Only such people say we should find our own solution for industrialism. There is truth in what they say. Industrialism is flooding all the world. Can India, even if she wants to, isolate herself and get out of the clutches of industrialism?"

The argument to which this lover of Khaddar has been involuntarily and irresistibly drawn is Satan's old device. He always goes with us halfway. and then suddenly insinuates that it is no good going further, and points to the seeming impossibility of further progress. He applauds virtue, but immediately says that it is not given to man to attain it.

Now the difficulty that has occurred to the friend is a difficulty that faces a reformer at every step. Have not untruth and hypocrisy permeated society ? Yet those who believe in the ultimate triumph of truth, persist in it in the absolute hope of success. A reformer never permits time to run against him, for he defies that ancient enemy. Of course industrialism is like a force of Nature, but it is given to man to control Nature and to conquer her forces. His dignity demands from him resolution in the face of overwhelming odds. Our daily life is such a conquest. An agriculturist knows it only too well.

What is industrialism but a control of the majority by a small minority ? There is nothing attractive about it, nor is there anything inevitable in it. If the majority simply wills to say ' no ' to the blandishments of the minority, the latter is powerless for mischief.

It is good to have faith in human nature. I live because I have that faith. But that faith does not blind me to the fact of history that, whilst in the ultimate all is well, individuals and groups called nations have before now perished. Rome, Greece, Babylon, Egypt and many others are a standing testimony in proof of the fact that nations have perished before now because of their misdeeds. What may be hoped for is that Europe on account of her fine and scientific intellect will realize the obvious and retrace her steps, and that from the demoralizing industrialism she will find a way out. It will not necessarily be a return to the old absolute simplicity. But it will have to be a reorganization in which village life will predominate, and in which brute and material force will be subordinated to the spiritual force.

Lastly, we must not be entrapped by false analogies. European writers are handicapped for want of experience and accurate information. They cannot guide us beyond a certain measure if they have to generalize from European examples which cannot be on all fours with Indian conditions, because in Europe they have nothing like the

conditions of India, not even excluding Russia. What may be, therefore, true of Europe is not necessarily true of India. We know, too, that each nation has its own characteristics and individuality. India has her own ; and if we are to find out a true solution for her many ills, we shall have to take all the idiosyncrasies of her constitution into account and then prescribe a remedy. I claim that to industrialize India in the same sense as Europe is to attempt the impossible. India has stood many a storm. Each has left its own indelible mark, it is true, but she has hitherto dauntlessly maintained her individuality. India is one of the few nations of the earth which have witnessed the fall of many civilizations, herself remaining scatheless. India is one of the few nations on the earth which have retained some of their ancient institutions although they have been overlaid with superstition and error. But she has hitherto shown an inherent capacity for purging herself of error and superstition. My faith in her ability to solve the economic problem that faces her millions has never been so bright as it is today.

Young India, 6-8-'25

11

INDUSTRIALISM TO BE AVOIDED

To make India like England and America is to find some other races and places of the earth for exploitation. So far it appears that the Western nations have divided all the known races outside Europe for exploitation and that there are no new worlds to discover. What can be the fate of India trying to ape the West ? Indeed the West has had a surfeit of industrialism and exploitation. If they who are suffering from the disease are unable to find a remedy to correct evils, how shall we, mere novices, be able to avoid them ? The fact is that this industrial civilization is a disease because it is all evil. Let us not be deceived by

catchwords and phrases. I have no quarrel with steamships or telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end. We must not suffer exploitation for the sake of steamships and telegraphs. They are in no way indispensable for the permanent welfare of the human race. India has withstood the onslaughts of other civilizations because she has stood firm on her own ground. Not that she has not made changes. But the changes she has made have promoted her growth. To change to industrialism is to court disaster. The present distress is undoubtedly insufferable. Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy.

India's destiny lies not along the bloody way of the West, of which she shows signs of tiredness, but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. She must not, therefore, lazily and helplessly say, 'I cannot escape the onrush from the West.' She must be strong enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world.

Young India, 7-10-'26

Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. It is because these factors are getting less and less every day for England that its number of unemployed is mounting up daily. The Indian boycott was but a flea-bite. And if that is the state of England, a vast country like India cannot expect to benefit by industrialization. In fact India when it begins to exploit other nations — as it must, if it becomes industrialized — will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrializing India to exploit other nations ? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation, viz. that we can find work for our 300 million unemployed, but England can find none for its 3 millions and is faced

with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England? The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, Japan, France and Germany. It has competitors in the handful of mills in India, and as there has been an awakening in India, even so there will be an awakening in South Africa with its vastly richer resources natural, mineral and human. The mighty English look quite pigmies before the mighty races of Africa. They are noble savages after all, you will say. They are certainly noble, but no savages, and in the course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares. And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India?

Young India, 12-11-'31

12

INDUSTRIALISM WILL INCREASE UNEMPLOYMENT

I hold that the machinery method is harmful when the same thing can be done easily by millions of hands not otherwise occupied. It is any day better and safer for the millions, spread in the seven hundred thousand villages of India scattered over an area nineteen hundred miles long and fifteen hundred broad, that they manufacture their clothing in their own villages even as they prepare their own food. These villages cannot retain the freedom they have enjoyed from time immemorial, if they do not control the production of prime necessaries of life. Western observers hastily argue from Western conditions that what may be true of them must be true of India where conditions are different in so many material respects. Application of the laws of economics must vary with varying conditions.

The machinery method is no doubt easy. But it is not necessarily a blessing on that account. The descent to a certain place is easy but dangerous. The method of the hand is a blessing, in the present case at any rate, because

it is hard. If the craze for the machinery method continues, it is highly likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God. Millions cannot keep fit by games and athletics. And why should they exchange the useful, productive, hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive and expensive games and exercises? They are all right today for a change and recreation. They will jar upon us when they become a necessary occupation in order that we may have the appetite for eating the food in the production of which we had no hand or part.

When India becomes self-supporting, self-reliant and proof against temptations and exploitation, she will cease to be the object of greedy attraction for any power in the West or the East, and will then feel secure without having to carry the burden of expensive armament. Her internal economy will be India's strongest bulwark against aggression.

Young India, 2-7-'31

India has to live, that is, her millions have to live. There is no other country in the world where so many millions of people have only partial employment and where, in spite of the civilization being predominantly rural, the holdings are barely two acres per head. To manufacture the whole of her cloth requirements through steam or electricity, or any other than the human power behind the wheel, is still further to deepen the unemployment of the population. An industrialized India must, therefore, mean utter extinction of many millions.

It is said that through highly industrialized processes every American owns what is equivalent to 36 slaves. If we use America as our model, and if we allowed only 30 slaves to every Indian instead of 36, out of our 31 crores of human beings 30 crores must perform *hari-kari* or be killed off. I know that some enthusiastic patriots will not only not

mind such a process, but they will welcome it. They will say that it is better to have one crore of happy, contented, prosperous Indians, armed to the teeth, than to have 30 crores of unarmed creatures who can hardly walk. I have no answer to that philosophy, because, being saturated with the Harijan mentality, I can only think in terms of the millions of villagers and can only make my happiness dependent upon that of the poorest amongst them, and want to live only if they can live. My very simple mind cannot go beyond the little spindle of the little wheel which I can carry about with me from place to place and which I can manufacture without difficulty. In this connection a friend sends me the following paragraph which is going round the press :

> " To relieve unemployment in certain industries the Nazis have ordered the stoppage of the use of machines which were displacing human labour. Commenting on this interdiction *The Manchester Guardian* remarks : 'There has been a great deal of discussion about the effects of machinery in aggravating the unemployment crisis, but it has been left to the Nazis to do the logical thing and stop using it. It is only a little while since the world was asked to admire the miraculous triumph of labour-saving rationalization in Germany. Now the Government is bent on fighting the machine, either by prohibiting its use or by compelling employers to work shorter hours and employ more men. Mr. Gandhi's efforts to replace the spinning frame by the hand-wheel and the mechanical loom by the handloom are being parallelled closely in the German cigar and glass industries."

The Guardian concludes its remarks by observing that, if Germany's 'ethics become mediaeval, there is no reason why her economics should not become mediaeval also.' Replying to these comments, a correspondent writes in *The Guardian* :

> 'Hitler, Gandhi and others who in different ways are endeavouring to slow production to a point at which all goods are consumed may be reverting to mediaeval methods, but handicrafts are neither retrograde nor barbaric. They are taught in every progressive elementary and secondary school.....Unless unemployment is abolished within a reasonable time, even by means that appear novel and unorthodox, then the machinery age will disappear in revolutions and wars that will destroy

us all. So long as machinery promotes the happiness and the prosperity of the masses as well as the classes it is a beneficent agent. But when it leads to the unemployment and starvation of millions, as is happening in the highly industrialized countries of the West, it becomes a curse. Machinery exists for man, and not *vice versa*, and must be made subservient to the well-being of the people and should not be allowed to become their master.'

That the village industries in Germany are being revived at the point of the sword is not relevant here. What is relevant is that a country, which has shown the highest technical skill and is amongst the most advanced in the matter of industrialization, is trying to go back to village industries for solving the problem of her terrible unemployment.

Harijan, 27-10-'33

Advice has been given to me that I must look for salvation in the direction of using the powers of nature that the inventive brain of man has brought under subjection. The critics say that water, air, oil and electricity should be fully utilized as they are being utilized in the go-ahead West. They say that control over these hidden powers of nature enables every American to have 33 slaves.

Repeat the process in India, and I dare say that it will thirty-three times enslave every inhabitant of this land, instead of giving everyone thirty-three slaves.

Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. I may not use a plough for digging a few square yards of a plot of land. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. Strange as it may appear, every mill generally is a menace to the villagers. I have not worked out the figures, but I am quite safe in saying that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same

work in their villages. In other words, he earns more than he did in his village at the expense of ten fellow-villagers. Thus spinning and weaving mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. It is no answer in reply to say that they turn out cheaper, better cloth, if they do so at all. For, if they have displaced thousands of workers, the cheapest mill cloth is dearer than the dearest Khadi woven in the villages. Coal is not dear for the coal miner who can use it there and then, nor is Khadi dear for the villager who manufactures his own Khadi.

Harijan, 16-11-'34

A factory employs a few hundreds and renders thousands unemployed. I may produce tons of oil from an oil mill, but I also drive thousands of oilmen out of employment. I call this destructive energy, whereas production by the labour of millions of hands is constructive and conducive to the common good. Mass production through power-driven machinery, even when State-owned, will be of no avail.

But why not, it is asked, save the labour of millions, and give them more leisure for intellectual pursuits ? Leisure is good and necessary up to a point only. God created man to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and I dread the prospect of our being able to produce all that we want, including our foodstuffs, out of a conjurer's hat.

Harijan, 16-5-'36

13

EXPORT OF CLOTH

An American journalist asked: "Why not have Indian people use Indian hand-spun cloth and keep her mills busy for the export of manufactured cloth and yarn? Don't you think that this would help the cotton-grower?" He evidently was thinking of a free India.

"I would not mind such a thing," said Gandhiji, "but it must be in order to supply the felt needs of the country which received our cloth. I have no idea of exploiting other countries for the benefit of India. We are suffering from the poisonous disease of exploitation ourselves, and I would not like my country to be guilty of any such thing. If Japan, say, as a free country wanted India's help, and said we could produce certain goods cheaper, and we might export them to Japan, we would gladly do so. But under my scheme of things all dumping of goods by one country in another, supported by her army and her navy, has to cease.

"Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them."

Harijan, 29-9-'40

SECTION THREE: OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

14

OBJECTIONS AGAINST KHADI

Gandhiji, always at his best when provoked, unbosomed himself when a friend objected that his advice took no count of the principle of division of labour. 'Do I ask you to do spinning for the whole of the day? Do I ask you to take it up as a substantive occupation? Where, then, is the breach of the principle of division of labour? Do you have a division of labour in eating and drinking?' he passionately asked. 'Just as every one of us must eat and drink and clothe himself, even so every one of us must spin himself.'

Young India, 28-5-'25

A friend asked me whether I proposed to replace the railways with country carts, and if I did not, how I expected to replace mills with wheels. I told him that I did not propose to replace railways with carts because I could not do so even if I wished. Three hundred million carts could not destroy distance. But I could replace mills with wheels. For railways solved the question of speed. With mills it was a question of production in which the wheel could easily compete if there were enough hands to work as there were in India. I told him that as a matter of fact a villager could manufacture for himself sufficient cloth cheaper than mills if he did not count the value of his labour. And he did not need to do so as he would spin or even weave during his spare hours. It is remarkable how false or incomplete analogies deceive people.

Another argument advanced was that the spinning wheel was a waste of effort. It was an astounding argument advanced without any thought given to it. I showed

that anything done with a purpose could not be regarded as waste of effort. The spinning wheel was presented to the nation for giving occupation to the millions who had, at least for four months in the year, nothing to do. I told the objector too that, seeing that the wheel produced at least 100 yards of yarn per every half hour, it could not be regarded as waste of effort. Moreover, it not only was not a waste of effort, but a sound economic proposition. For, what was required for the millions was a universal productive occupation which could be taken up during odd moments and which did not require any special talent or long course of training to learn. Such an occupation was only hand-spinning and no other.

Young India, 28-5-'25

Say the critics, the spinning wheel has not taken, it is not exciting enough, it is an occupation only for women, it means a return to the middle ages, it is a vain effort against the majestic march of scientific knowledge for which machinery stands. In my humble opinion India's need is not excitement but solid work. For the millions solid work itself is excitement and tonic at the same time. The fact is that we have not given the spinning wheel enough trial. I am sorry to have to say that many of us have not given it a serious thought. Even the members of the All India Congress Committee have failed to carry out the series of resolutions on hand-spinning which they themselves have passed from time to time. The majority of us have simply not believed in it. In the circumstances it is hardly just to say that spinning has failed for want of excitement about it. To say that it is merely an old woman's occupation is to ignore facts. Spinning mills are a multiplication of spinning wheels. They are managed by men. It is time that we got out of this superstition that some occupations are beneath the dignity of men. Under normal conditions no doubt spinning will be the occupation of the gentle sex. But the State of the future will always have to keep some men at the spinning wheel so as

to make improvements in it within the limitations which as a cottage industry it must have. I must inform you that the progress the mechanism of the wheel has made would have been impossible, if some of us men had not worked at it and had not thought about it day and night.

Young India, 26-12-'24

Thus writes a professor :

> "Personally I have full faith in the spinning wheel and Khaddar. But I am of opinion that you have begun at the wrong end. To ask able-bodied men to sit for spinning, like women, is what appears odd in the eyes of most of the people.
>
> "In my humble opinion, you should have left men alone, busy with their various sorts of political propaganda, and should have taken your message direct to the women of the land. Let your great programme of *charkha* and Khaddar be confined to women for the present, and let men fight the battle of freedom with manlier weapons."

The letter was rather long. I have boiled down the argument without changing the language. It is evident that the learned professor does not know the condition of the women of India. Or he would have known that ordinarily men do not get the privilege or the opportunity of addressing women. It has been my good fortune, no doubt, to be able to do so to a certain extent. But, in spite of all the facilities given to me, I have not been able to reach them to the extent I have reached men. He should also know that the women cannot act without the consent of men. I can quote several instances where men have prevented women from adopting the *charkha* or Khaddar. Thirdly, women cannot make the inventions and the changes that men can make. Had the movement of spinning been confined only to women, it would have been impossible to make the improvements that the *charkha* has undergone during the past four years or to organize spinning in the manner it has been. Fourthly, it is contrary to experience to say that any vocation is exclusively reserved for one sex only. Cooking is predominantly the occupation of women. But a soldier would be worthless

who cannot cook his own food. The whole of the cooking in camps is necessarily and naturally done by men. Moreover, whilst women naturally cook for the household, organized cooking on a large scale is universally done by men throughout the world. Fighting is predominantly men's occupation, but Arab women fought like heroines side by side with their husbands in the early struggle of Islam. The Rani of Jhansi distinguished herself for her bravery as very few men did during the Sepoy Revolt. And today in Europe we find women shining as lawyers, doctors and administrators. The clerical profession is being almost monopolized by women shorthand writers and typists. Why is spinning not a manly occupation ? Why is anything that will bring about the economic and spiritual uplift of India (and spinning will, according to the professor) not manly enough for men ? Does not the professor know that it was a man who invented the spinning jenny ? Had he not invented it, the history of mankind would have been written differently. Needle work is essentially women's work. But the master tailors of the world are men. And it was a man who invented the sewing machine. Had Singer despised the needle, he would not have left his legacy to mankind. Had men taken care of spinning side by side with the women of India in days gone by, we would perhaps have never given up spinning as we did under pressure from the East India Company. The politician may devote himself to pure politics as much as he likes, but if we are to clothe ourselves by the joint effort of millions, the politician, the poet, the potentate, the pandit and the pauper, male or female, Hindu or Mussalman, Christian, Parsi or Jew, will have religiously to give half an hour to spinning for the sake of the country. Religion of humanity is not the exclusive prerogative of any sex or class. It is the prerogative, nay the duty, of all. The religion of Indian humanity demands half an hour's spinning at least from everyone who calls himself or herself Indian.

Young India, 11-6-'25

KV157

The difficulties that were suggested to me in making hand-spinning a success were mainly two :

(1) Hand-spun yarn can never compete with mill-spun yarn because it has never yet been found to be as strong as mill-spun yarn.

(2) The output of the spinning wheel is too small to be profitable.

The experience of those who have worn Khaddar for years is that where it is made of good hand-spun yarn it is any day more durable than the best mill-spun cloth of the same count. For instance, some of my Andhra friends have shown me their *dhotis* which have lasted four years and upwards against mill-spun *dhotis* which wear out inside of a year. But my point is not that hand-spun is more durable, but that hand-spinning being the only possible supplementary industry for the peasantry of India, which means 85 per cent of its population, all our arrangements regarding clothing should be fashioned on the understanding that it must be supplied from hand-spun yarn. Thus our energy should be concentrated not on finding out the best and the cheapest yarn, no matter where and how spun, but on finding out the cheapest and the best hand-spun yarn. If my proposition is sound, all the industrial departments of the nation should revolve round the *charkha* as the centre. The department of industries, therefore, would make improvements in the spinning wheels so as to increase the output. They would buy hand-spun yarn, so that hand-spinning is automatically stimulated. They would devise means of utilizing every quality of hand-spun yarn obtainable. They would issue prizes for the finest hand-spun yarn. They would explore all possible fields for getting good hand-spun yarn.

But it has been objected that hand-spinning is not profitable. But surely it is profitable for those who have many an idle hour at their disposal and to whose scanty income even a pice is a welcome addition. The whole of the *charkha* programme falls to pieces if millions of peasants are not living in enforced idleness for at least four months

in the year. Wherever Khadi workers are doing their labour of love it has become not only profitable but a blessing to villagers to have men who would buy their yarn. Those whose income does not exceed five to six rupees per month and have time at their disposal would gladly take in work that brings them an addition of two rupees per month.

Young India, 8-10-'25

The subsidiary industry of cattle-breeding that has been suggested is no doubt good and any day more paying than spinning. But it requires capital and a knowledge of breeding which the ordinary cultivator does not possess and cannot and will not possess without much previous preparation. Turn it how you will, therefore, for Indian conditions there is no other subsidiary industry that can compete with hand-spinning.

Its inestimable value consists not in its capacity for paying a few individuals highly, but in immediately providing a remunerative occupation for millions. It is the only subsidiary occupation, therefore, that is capable of being successfully organized. Hence not cattle-breeding, however good it is in itself, but hand-spinning is the subsidiary industry *par excellence*.

Young India, 15-10-'25

The readers of *Young India* know that I have never suggested that those who are more lucratively employed should give up their lucrative employment and prefer hand-spinning. I have said repeatedly that those only are expected and should be induced to spin who have no other paying employment, and that too only during the hours of unemployment. There are only, therefore, two classes of people who are expected to spin — those who would spin for hire, whom I have already mentioned, and the thinking part of India who should spin for sacrifice by way of example and in order to cheapen Khaddar.

Young India, 22-10-'25

The Poet * thinks that I want everybody to spin the whole of his or her time to the exclusion of all other activity, that is to say, I want the poet to forsake his muse, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief, and the doctor his lancet. So far is this from truth that I have asked no one to abandon his calling, but on the contrary to adorn it by giving every day only thirty minutes to spinning as sacrifice for the whole nation. I have indeed asked the famishing man or woman who is idle for want of any work whatsoever to spin for a living, and the half-starved farmer to spin during his leisure hours to supplement his slender resources. If the Poet span for half an hour daily, his poetry would gain in richness. For it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now.

The Poet thinks that the *charkha* is calculated to bring about a deathlike sameness in the nation, and thus imagining he would shun it if he could. The truth is that the *charkha* is intended to realize the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads. Behind the magnificent and kaleidoscopic variety one discovers in nature a unity of purpose, design and form which is equally unmistakable. No two men are absolutely alike, not even twins, and yet there is much that is indispensably common to all mankind. And behind the commonness of form there is the same life pervading all.

Is not agriculture common to the vast majority of mankind ? Even so was spinning common not long ago to a vast majority of mankind. Just as both prince and peasant must eat and clothe themselves, so must both labour for supplying their primary wants. The prince may do so if only by way of symbol and sacrifice, but that much is indispensable for him if he will be true to himself and his people. Europe may not realize this vital necessity at the present moment, because it has made of exploitation of non-European races a religion. But it is a false religion bound to perish in the near future.

* Ravindranath Tagore.

An improved plough is a good thing. But if by some chance one man could plough up, by some mechanical invention of his, the whole of the land of India and control all the agricultural produce, and if the millions had no other occupation, they would starve, and being idle, they would become dunces, as many have already become. There is hourly danger of many more being reduced to that unenviable state. I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine, but I know that it is criminal to displace the hand labour by the introduction of power-driven spindles unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their homes.

For Indian distress every effort at co-operation has to centre round the *charkha*. Round the *charkha*, that is amidst the people who have shed their idleness and who have understood the value of co-operation, a national servant would build up a programme of anti-malaria campaign, improved sanitation, settlement of village disputes, conservation and breeding of cattle, and hundreds of other beneficial activities. Wherever *charkha* work is fairly established all such ameliorative activity is going on according to the capacity of the villagers and the workers concerned.

Young India, 5-11-'25

I have not contemplated, much less advised the abandonment of a single healthy, life-giving industrial activity for the sake of hand-spinning. The entire foundation of the spinning wheel rests on the fact that there are crores of semi-unemployed people in India. And I should admit that, if there were none such, there would be no room for the spinning wheel. But as a matter of fact everybody who has been to our villages knows that they have months of idleness which may prove their ruin. Even my appeal to the middle class people to spin for sacrifice is with reference to their spare hours. The spinning wheel movement is destructive of no enterprise whatever. It is a life-giving activity. And that is why I have called it *Annapurna* or the butter for bread or the replenisher.

Young India, 27-5-'26

It is not true to say that women spinners work ten hours per day. Whatever spinning they do is done during their spare hours, and what they get is not a day's wage but in the majority of cases a substantial addition to their daily earnings from their daily avocation. The earnings from spinning is waste turned into wealth. Spinning has never been conceived as a full-day occupation.

Young India, 19-12-'29

A sister writes:

> "A year ago I heard you speaking on the supreme necessity of every one of us wearing Khadi, and thereupon decided to adopt it. But we are poor people. My husband says that Khadi is costly. Belonging as I do to Maharashtra, I wear a *sari*, 9 yards long. Now if I reduced the length of my *sari* to 6 yards, there would be a great saving, but the elders will not hear of any such reduction. I reason with them that wearing Khadi is the more important thing, and that the style and length of the *sari* is absolutely immaterial, but in vain. They say that it is my youth that puts all these new fangled notions into my head. But I expect they will agree to the proposed reduction in length if you are good enough to write to me, saying that Khadi ought to be used, even at the cost of the style of clothing."

I have sent the desired reply to the sister. But I take note of her difficulty here, as I know that the same difficulty is encountered by many other sisters as well.

The Deccani *sari* is a thing of beauty, but the beauty must be let go if it can be secured only by sacrificing the nation. We should consider the Kachchhi style of short *sari* or the Punjabi *odhni* to be really artistic, if the wearing of Khadi can be cheapened and facilitated by their means. The Deccani, Gujarati, Kachchhi and Bengali styles of wearing *sari* are all of them various national styles, and each of them is as national as the rest. Such being the case, preference should be accorded to that style which requires the smallest amount of cloth consistently with the demands of decency. Such is the Kachchhi style, which takes up only 3 yards of cloth, i.e. about half the length of the Gujarati *sari*, not to mention the saving of trouble in having to carry a smaller weight. If the *pachhedo* and

the petticoat are of the same colour, one cannot at once make out whether it is only a *pachhedo* or full *sari*. The mutual exchange and imitation of such national style is eminently desirable.

Patriotic people of the middle and poorer classes should take pride in adopting that particular provincial style which cheapens as well as facilitates the wearing of Khadi. And even there they should fix their eye upon the clothing style of the poorest of the poor.

Young India, 2-2-'28

Do I want to put back the hand of the clock of progress? Do I want to replace the mills by hand-spinning and hand-weaving? Do I want to replace the railway by the country cart? Do I want to destroy machinery altogether? These questions have been asked by some journalists and public men. My answer is: I would not weep over the disappearance of machinery or consider it a calamity. But I have no design upon machinery as such. What I want to do at the present moment is to supplement the production of yarn and cloth through our mills, save the millions we send out of India, and distribute them in our cottages.

Young India, 19-1-'21

A socialist holding a brief for machinery asked Gandhiji if the village industries movement was not meant to oust all machinery.

'Is not this wheel a machine?' was the counter-question that Gandhiji, who was just then spinning, gave in reply.

'I do not mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery."

'Do you mean Singer's sewing machine? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave.'

'But what about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?'

'Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work, or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work?

'I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphyxiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many.

'But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness, but this,' said Gandhiji pointing to his spinning wheel. 'I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you, and am adding a little to the wealth of the country. This machine no one can oust.'

Harijan, 22-6-'35

15

IS KHADI ECONOMICALLY SOUND?

If by the question is meant whether Khadi can compete in price with Japanese 'fent' or even with the cloth manufactured by the Indian mills, the answer must be emphatically 'no'. But the negative answer would have to be given about almost everything turned out by man power as against labour-saving machine power. It would have to be so even with regard to goods manufactured in Indian factories. Cloth, iron and sugar made in factories require State aid in some form or other to withstand foreign competition. It is wrong to put the question in that way at all. In the open market a more organized industry will always be able to drive out a less organized one, much more so when the former is assisted by bounties and can command unlimited capital and can therefore afford to sell its manufactures at a temporary loss. Such has been the tragic fate of many enterprises in this country.

Any country that exposes itself to unlimited foreign competition can be reduced to starvation and therefore subjection if the foreigners desire it. This is known as peaceful penetration. One has to go only a step further to understand that the result would be the same as between hand-made goods and those made by power-driven machinery. We are seeing the process going on before our eyes. Little flour mills are ousting the *chakki*, oil mills the village *ghani*, rice mills the village *dhenki*, sugar mills the village *gud*-pans, etc. This displacement of village labour is impoverishing the villagers and enriching the moneyed men. If the process continues sufficiently long, the villages will be destroyed without any further effort. No Chengis Khan could devise a more ingenious or more profitable method of destroying these villages. And the tragedy of it all is that the villagers are unconsciously but none the less surely contributing to their own destruction. To complete

the tale of their woe let the reader know that even cultivation has ceased to be profitable. For some crops the villager does not cover even the cost of seed.

With all these deadly admissions, what do I mean by saying that Khadi is the only true economic proposition ? Let me then state the proposition fully : " Khadi is the only true economic proposition in terms of the millions of villagers until such time, if ever, when a better system of supplying work and adequate wages for every able-bodied person above the age of sixteen, male or female, is found for his field, cottage or even factory in every one of the villages in India ; or till sufficient cities are built up to displace the villages so as to give the villagers the necessary comforts and amenities that a well-regulated life demands and is entitled to." I have only to state the proposition thus fully to show that Khadi must hold the field for any length of time that we can think of.

The present pressing problem is how to find work and wages for the millions of villagers who are becoming increasingly pauperized, as anyone who will take the trouble of going to the villages can testify for himself and as is amply proved by contemporary expert evidence. The people are becoming poorer economically, mentally and morally. They are fast losing the will to work, to think, and even to live. It is a living death that they are living. Khadi supplies them with work, tools and a ready market for their manufactures. It gives them hope where but yesterday there was blank despair.

" Then why has Khadi made so little progress, if it is such a hopeful proposition ? " the sceptic asks. The answer is : The progress Khadi has made in terms of the millions, though little in itself, is comparatively the largest of all the other single industries. It distributes yearly the largest amount as wages among the largest number of wage-earners in the villages with the minimum of overhead charges, and every pice practically circulates among the people. This can be verified by anyone who would study the figures published by the A.I.S.A.

Khadi has to work against almost settled prejudices among the villagers, against unscrupulous competition without State protection, and against the prevalent opinion of so-called experts in the science of economics, against even the demand of Khadi wearers for progressively cheaper Khadi. It is thus largely a question of the education of the villagers and the city-dwellers in the true economics for this land of tears. These transcend all religions. Hindus, Mussalmans and Christians who live in the villages suffer from the same disease of poverty and want. If there is a difference, it is only one of degree.

I therefore maintain that though yard per yard Khadi may be dearer than mill-made cloth, in its totality and in terms of the villagers it is the most economic and practical proposition without a rival. Khadi may be interpreted to include other village industries for the purposes of a thorough examination of the proposition.

Harijan, 20-6-'36

SECTION FOUR: KHADI *v.* FOREIGN CLOTH

16

NO FOREIGN CLOTH

The immediate problem before us is not how to run the Government of the country, but how to feed and clothe ourselves. In 1918 we sent sixty crores of rupees out of India for buying cloth. If we continue to purchase foreign cloth at that rate, we deprive the Indian weaver and spinner of that amount from year to year without practically giving him or her any other work in exchange. No wonder a tenth at least of the population is cruelly half-starved and the majority of the rest underfed.

Young India, 19-1-'21

We must be prepared to be satisfied with such cloth as India can produce, even as we are thankfully content with such children as God gives us. I have not known a mother throwing away her baby even though it may appear ugly to an outsider. So should it be with the patriotic women of India about Indian manufactures. And for you only hand-spun and hand-woven can be regarded as Indian manufactures. During the transition stage you can only get coarse Khadi in abundance. You may add all the art to it that your taste allows or requires. And if you will be satisfied with coarse Khadi for a few months, India need not despair of seeing a revival of the fine, rich and coloured garments of old which were once the envy and the despair of the world. I assure you that a six months' course of self-denial will show you that what we today regard as artistic is only falsely so, and that true art takes note not merely of form but also of what lies behind. There is an art that kills and an art that gives life. The fine fabric that we have imported from the West or the Far East has

literally killed millions of our brothers and sisters, and delivered thousands of our dear sisters to a life of shame. True art must be evidence of happiness, contentment and purity of its authors. And if you will have such art revived in our midst, the use of Khadi is obligatory on the best of you.

Young India, 11-8-'21

17

IN 1828

Shri Satish Chandra Dasgupta of the Khadi Pratishthan is editing a Bengali newspaper called *Rashtra-vani*. He recently unearthed a letter addressed to the editor of *Samachar Darpan* which was published in Bengali in the twenties of the 19th century. As the letter was of great importance showing how the *charkha* was being slowly destroyed and how it was valued by women in those days, he has published it in his paper and sent me its translation. I am sure it will be read with interest by all who are at all interested in the Khadi movement. Here is the letter :

"The Representation of a Spinner

To the Editor, *The Samachar*

I am a spinner. After having suffered a great deal, I am writing this letter. Please publish this in your paper. I have heard that, if it is published, it will reach those who may lighten my distress and fulfil my desire. Please do not slight this letter from a poor sufferer.

I am very unfortunate. It would be a long story if I were to write all about my sufferings. Still I must write in brief.

When my age was five and a half *gandas* (22) I became a widow with three daughters. My husband left nothing at the time of his death wherewith to maintain my old father- and mother-in-law and three daughters. He had several businesses. I sold my jewellery for his Shraddha ceremony. At last as we were on the verge of starvation God showed me a way by which we could save ourselves. I began to spin on *takli* and *charkha*.

In the morning I used to do the usual work of cleaning the household and then sit at the *charkha* till noon, and after cooking and feeding the old parents and daughters I would have my fill and

sit spinning fine yarn on the *takli.* Thus I used to spin about a tola. The weavers used to visit our homes and buy the *charkha* yarn at three tolas per rupee. Whatever amount I wanted as advance from the weavers, I could get for the asking. This saved us from cares about food and cloth.

In a few years' time I got together seven *ganda* rupees (Rs. 28). With this I married one daughter. And in the same way all three daughters. There was no departure from the caste customs. Nobody looked down upon these daughters because I gave all concerned, the *ghatakas* and caste people, what was due to them. When my father-in-law died I spent eleven *ganda* rupees (Rs. 44) on his Shraddha. This money was lent me by the weavers which I repaid in a year and a half. And all this through the grace of the *charkha.*

Now for three years we two women, mother-in-law and I, are in want of food. The weavers do not call at the house for buying yarn. Not only this, if the yarn is sent to the market, it is not sold even at one-fourth the old prices. I do not know how it happened. I asked many about it. They say that *bilati* (foreign) yarn is being largely imported. The weavers buy that yarn and weave. I had a sense of pride that *bilati* yarn could not be equal to my yarn, but when I got *bilati* yarn I saw that it was better than my yarn. I heard that its price is Rs. 3 or Rs. 4 per seer. I beat my brow and said, 'Oh God, there are sisters more distressed even than I. I had thought that all men of *Bilat* were rich, but now I see that there are women there who are poorer than I.' I fully realized the poverty which induced those poor women to spin. They have sent the product of so much toil out here because they could not sell it there. It would have been something if they were sold here at good prices. But it has brought our ruin only. Men cannot use the cloth out of this yarn even for two months; it rots away. I therefore entreat the spinners over there that, if they will consider this representation, they will be able to judge whether it is fair to send yarn here or not.

Shantipur

A representation from a
suffering spinner
Samachar Darpan"

The reader will not fail to observe the nobility of the writer who in her blissful ignorance felt that yarn was spun by the hands of her *bilati* sisters poorer than herself, and therefore felt for them. Alas, her belief was baseless. She could have stood her own if the foreign yarn had been hand-spun. She could have stood her own even against the foreign yarn, if behind it there had been no policy of

determination to capture the Indian trade and kill the national village industry.

Young India, 21-5-'31

18

FOREIGN TRADE

I hold it to be sinful for me to refuse to buy the cloth spun and woven by the needy millions of India's paupers and to buy foreign cloth although it may be superior in quality to the Indian hand-spun. My Swadeshi, therefore, chiefly centres round the hand-spun Khaddar and extends to everything that can be and is produced in India. My nationalism is as broad as my Swadeshi. I want India's rise so that the whole world may benefit. I do not want India to rise on the ruin of other nations. If, therefore, India was strong and able, India would send out to the world her treasures of art and health-giving spices, but would refuse to send out opium or intoxicating liquors although the traffic may bring much material benefit to India.

Young India, 12-3-'25

It is the duty of every Indian to raise his voice against the nation using foreign cloth. The opposition really is not to the cloth being foreign but to the poverty which its importation brings in its train.

Young India, 8-1-'25

I have never been an advocate of prohibition of all things foreign because they are foreign. My economic creed is a complete taboo in respect of all foreign commodities whose importation is likely to prove harmful to our indigenous interests. This means that we may not in any circumstance import a commodity that can be adequately supplied from our own country. For instance, I would regard it a sin to import Australian wheat on the score of its better quality, but I would not have the slightest hesitation in importing oatmeal from Scotland, if an absolute necessity for it is made out, because we do not grow oats

in India. In other words, I would not countenance the boycott of a single foreign article out of ill-will or a feeling of hatred. Or to take up a reverse case, India produces a sufficient quantity of leather; it is my duty, therefore, to wear shoes made out of Indian leather only, even if it is comparatively dearer and of an inferior quality, in preference to cheaper and superior quality foreign leather shoes. Similarly I would condemn the introduction of foreign molasses or sugar if enough of it is produced in India for our needs. It will be thus clear from the above that it is hardly possible for me to give an exhaustive catalogue of foreign articles whose importation in India ought to be prohibited. I have simply inculcated the general principle by which we can be guided in all such cases. And this principle will hold good in future too so long as the conditions of production in our country remain as they are today.

Young India, 15-11-'28

We need not exclude from use foreign cotton, for it is a raw product. What we must boycott for the sake of the starving masses living in enforced idleness for at least four months in the year is foreign yarn and cloth which the masses can spin and weave in their cottages.

Young India, 5-4-'28

We, in our country, are in honour bound to prefer hand-spun Khaddar to foreign cloth, no matter how inconvenient it may be to us. It is flimsy philosophy that teaches us to go to the cheapest market irrespective of what happens therethrough to our next door neighbours. Free donations of fine wheat from Australia or America would be poison to us, if that meant a workless India with her soil growing weeds instead of golden grain. Similarly a free gift of cloth from Manchester would be too costly a bargain for India to accept. I repeat, therefore, that Khaddar is cheap at any price so long as it serves to utilize the idle hours of the nation, and there is nothing else immediately in view to occupy them as usefully.

Young India, 17-1-'29

19

SWADESHI

There are several Swadeshi things on the market which are in danger of disappearance for want of patronage. They may not be up to the mark. It is for us to use them and require the makers to improve them wherever improvement is possible. The rule of the best and the cheapest is not always true. Just as we do not give up our country for one with a better climate but endeavour to improve our own, so also may we not discard Swadeshi for better or cheaper foreign things. Even as a husband who being dissatisfied with his simple-looking wife goes in search of a better-looking woman is disloyal to his partner, so is a man disloyal to his country who prefers foreign-made things though better to country-made things. The law of each country's progress demands on the part of its inhabitants preference for their own products and manufactures.

Young India, 30-5-'29

A votary of Swadeshi will as a first duty dedicate himself to the service of his immediate neighbours. This involves exclusion or even sacrifice of the interests of the rest, but the exclusion or the sacrifice would be apparent only. Pure service of one's neighbours can never, from its very nature, result in disservice to those who are remotely situated ; rather the contrary. 'As with the individual so with the universe' is an unfailing principle which we would do well to lay to heart. On the other hand a man who allows himself to be lured by 'the distant scene' and runs to the ends of the earth for service, is not only foiled in his ambition but fails in his duty towards his neighbours also. Take a concrete instance. In the particular place where I live I have certain persons as my neighbours, some relations and dependents. Naturally they all feel, as they have a right to, that they have a claim on me, and look to me for help and support. Suppose now I

leave them all at once and set out to serve people in a distant place. My decision would throw my little world of neighbours and dependents out of gear, while my gratuitous knight-errantry would more likely than not disturb the atmosphere in the new place. Thus a culpable neglect of my immediate neighbours and an unintended disservice to the people whom I wish to serve would be the first fruits of my violation of the principles of Swadeshi.

It is not difficult to multiply such instances. That is why the Gita says: "It is better to die performing one's duty or *swadharma*, but *paradharma*, or another's duty, is fraught with danger." Interpreted in terms of one's physical environment this gives us the law of Swadeshi. What the Gita says with regard to *swadharma* equally applies to Swadeshi also, for Swadeshi is *swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment.

It is only when the doctrine of Swadeshi is wrongly understood that mischief results, e.g. it would be a travesty of the doctrine of Swadeshi, if in order to coddle my family I set about grabbing money by all means, fair or foul. The law of Swadeshi requires me no more than to discharge my legitimate obligations towards my family by just means, and the attempt to do so will reveal to me the universal code of conduct. The practice of Swadeshi can never do harm to any one, and if it does, it is not *swadharma* but egotism that moves me.

There may come occasions when a votary of Swadeshi may be called upon to sacrifice his family at the altar of universal service. Such an act of willing immolation will then constitute the highest service rendered to the family. "Whosoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whosoever loses his life for the Lord's sake will find it," holds good for the family group no less than the individual. Take another instance. Supposing there is an outbreak of the plague in my village and in trying to serve the victims of the epidemic I, my wife and children and all the rest of my family are wiped out of existence, then in inducing those dearest and nearest to join me I will not

have acted as the destroyer of my family but, on the contrary, as its truest friend. In Swadeshi there is no room for selfishness, or if there is selfishness in it, it is of the highest type which is not different from the highest altruism. Swadeshi in its purest form is the acme of universal service.

It was by following this line of argument that I hit upon Khadi as a necessary and the most important corollary of the principle of Swadeshi in its application to society. " What is the kind of service," I asked myself, " that the teeming millions of India most need at the present time that can be easily understood and appreciated by all, that is easy to perform and will at the same time enable the crores of our semi-starved countrymen to live," and the reply came that it is the universalization of Khadi or the spinning wheel alone that can fulfil these conditions.

Let no one suppose that the practice of Swadeshi through Khadi will harm the foreign mill-owners. A thief who is weaned from his vice or is made to return the property that he has stolen is not harmed thereby ; on the contrary he is the gainer consciously in the one case, unconsciously in the other. Similarly, if all the opium-addicts or the drunkards in the world were to shake themselves free from their vice, the canteen keepers or the opium-vendors who would be deprived of their customers could not be said to be losers. They would be the gainers in the truest sense of the word. The elimination of the ' wages of sin ' is never a loss either to the individual concerned or to society, it is pure gain.

It is the greatest delusion to suppose that the duty of Swadeshi begins and ends with merely spinning so much yarn anyhow and wearing Khadi made from it. Khadi is the first indispensable step towards the discharge of *Swadeshi Dharma* towards society. One often meets men who wear Khadi but in all other things indulge their taste for foreign manufactures with a vengeance. Such men cannot be said to be practising Swadeshi. They are simply following the fashion. A votary of Swadeshi will carefully

study his environment and try to help his neighbours wherever possible by giving preference to local manufactures even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere. He will try to remedy their defects, but will not give them up because of their defects and take to foreign manufactures.

But even Swadeshi like any other good thing can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger that must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money to promote manufactures in one's country for which it is not suited, would be criminal folly and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit. A true votary of Swadeshi will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner; he will not be moved by antagonism towards anybody on earth. Swadeshism is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest Ahimsa, i.e. love.

Young India, 18-6-'31

20

BOYCOTT OF FOREIGN CLOTH THROUGH KHADI

1. Congress organizations should call for volunteers to go from door to door in every town and village having a Congress committee and collect foreign cloth in the possession of the householders, and deliver or receive orders for Khadi required by such householders.

2. All Khadi should bear the stamp of the All India Spinners' Association, and prices should be distinctly marked on them.

3. Voluntary preachers should be called for to popularize the use of Khadi and to advocate complete boycott of foreign cloth.

Note: Volunteers and preachers should know genuine from spurious Khadi.

4. Foreign cloth collected should be publicly burnt wherever possible.

5. Foreign cloth dealers should be individually visited with a view to enlisting their help and inducing them to stop further purchase of foreign cloth and to cancel all cancellable orders.

6. Picketing of foreign cloth shops may be undertaken wherever possible and where there is no danger of violence being committed by Congress pickets, the latter being reliable and seasoned volunteers.

7. All units should from day to day report to the Central Office details of work done in terms of the foregoing, and the latter should circulate to the press for publication a weekly digest of day-to-day progress.

8. Help and co-operation of all political and other organizations should be solicited in the campaign.

9. Help of patriotic ladies should be enlisted to prosecute the boycott campaign.

10. The All India Spinners' Association should be asked to furnish the Central Office with a list of places where genuine Khadi is available and to open stores where there is a demand for Khadi.

11. A small committee called the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee should be formed and entrusted with an initial fund with power to collect more funds. The Committee should be under obligation to publish duly audited statements of income and expenditure every quarter.

12. The Committee proposed in para 11 should publish and distribute broadcast leaflets showing the necessity and possibility of boycott, giving full details as to the method of achieving it by individuals.

13. Resolutions should be moved in the provincial legislatures as well as the central, calling upon their respective Governments to make all their cloth purchases in Khadi irrespective of its so-called costliness. Resolutions should also be moved demanding a prohibitive duty on imports of foreign cloth.

Note: The foregoing scheme is based upon the assumption that the Congress committees all over India will be immediately reorganized, and that there will be handsome response to the call for membership, and that there will be full co-operation on the part of all Congress committees in the prosecution of the campaign of boycott of foreign cloth through Khadi. It is suggested that, if these conditions are fulfilled, it is possible to achieve this boycott during the year, at any rate to the extent of making a visible impression upon the imports of foreign cloth.

Young India, 24-1-'29

I hold that we committed a crime against Indian humanity when we parted with the spinning wheel and sold the economic independence of India for a pottage of foreign cloth. And today, acted upon by inertia, we are repeating that crime. I have therefore felt it to be my bounden duty to awaken India from her torpor. We have got ready-made power in the arms and hands of millions of able-bodied men and women that are today rusting in idleness in the cottages of India. There is no reason why these millions of idle hands should not be turning millions of spindles in the cottages of the 7,00,000 villages of India. England does not grow cotton, and yet she finds it possible for her to carry cotton grown in India all the way over to Lancashire and to return it to India in the form of cloth. How much more easy should it be then for us to carry cotton that we ourselves grow from place to place in India where it may be needed, and get it woven into cloth? In spite of apathy and in spite of passive and even active opposition, the thing is being done today in two thousand villages in this country. And our needy sisters do not mind walking several miles from day to day or week to week to get money or cotton in exchange for the yarn that their delicate fingers have spun. If, therefore, we have the slightest feeling for these needy sisters and for the starving millions of India, one-tenth of whom, according to English administrators themselves, hardly get a square meal from year's end to year's

end, you will discard and consign to the flames every inch of foreign cloth as the least penance, the least expiation that India expects her sons to do.

Let it be known that there are millions in India who can work at the spinning wheel for eight hours a day, and that it is impossible for them to use all the Khadi woven therefrom. It is the bounden duty of good citizens of India to take off the surplus product that is turned out by these brothers and sisters of theirs. Let us not also forget that it is man's social nature which distinguishes him from the brute creation. If it is his privilege to be independent, it is equally his duty to be interdependent. Only an arrogant man will claim to be independent of everybody else and be self-contained. It will be possible to reconstruct our villages so that the villages collectively, not the villagers individually, will become self-contained so far as their clothing requirements are concerned. It is for that reason that I have said times without number that when Khadi becomes current coin in India, it will have nothing to fear from the competition of foreign cloth or even of Indian mill-made cloth. A little reflection will show that this is a self-demonstrable proposition.

Young India, 25-4-'29

Let us just examine the proposition that boycott cannot be achieved through Khadi. It is said that Khadi production is not enough for our wants. Those who talk or write thus do not know the A B C of Khadi. Khadi is capable of infinite expansion because it can be as easily made as bread if we have the will. I need not go into the economics of Khadi for the purpose of boycott. Supposing England and Japan ceased to send us their cloth and our mills somehow or other could not work, we would not think of the economics of Khadi, but we would simply manufacture the required quantity in our own homes. The merchants who had lost their piecegoods trade would all be occupied in Khadi production. It is only because we have created a vicious atmosphere of impotence round ourselves

that we consider ourselves to be helpless even for the simplest possible things.

This movement depends for its success upon the willing and organized co-operation of millions. This co-operation can be had for the asking if the thinking class will put their hands to the wheel with the fixed determination to succeed. Let them remember that this is a movement which has a growing and vigilant organization with a modest capital. It has only to be worked by the nation to its fullest capacity, and success is a certainty.

Once the spirit of true sacrifice seizes the nation, it is possible to inundate the market with hand-spun yarn. And I have shown that the secret of Khadi production lies in increased production of yarn. There are over ninety-seven lakhs of pupils studying in all the schools of India. It makes a miserable percentage of less than 4 per cent of the total population, but the number is enough for easy organization of sacrificial spinning. This figure takes no account of several other institutions that can be also similarly organized without much effort, if the determination is reached that we must achieve boycott through Khadi.

Young India, 20-6-'29

Many people seem to fear that presently there will be no Khadi on the market, and that then we shall be as before at the mercy of the indigenous mills with the danger of being once more bamboozled and fooled into taking foreign cloth in the guise of Indian mill-made cloth or at least paying exorbitant prices. The danger is real if we will not devote our time to producing Khadi in all the ways open to us. The ways are :

1. Spinning for self,
2. Spinning for hire, and
3. Spinning for sacrifice.

The first is the most important, universal, and never-failing, once it is organized. It is the cheapest method of Khadi production, for it does away with the bother of having to find a market for the production. The second is spinning for hire for which there is great scope. But this

needs capital for stocking cotton and organizing sales. But of course it also taxes our business capacity, makes us resourceful, and enables us to build up a vast organization and finds honourable employment for the middle class people. The third method is noble but can be taken up only by a select class. If the nation realized the necessity of sacrifice, it could be a means of producing an unlimited quantity of yarn. All the schools conducted by Municipalities can give us yarn to clothe lakhs of people. City-dwellers giving half an hour per day to the wheel can give at least 100 yards of good yarn. Let no one thoughtlessly retort that they can better employ their half hour than by merely spinning yarn. A banker finding himself stranded in a waterless desert cannot better employ his hours than by collecting fresh water. An India bent upon achieving boycott of foreign cloth during this year cannot better employ the time of even the best of her inhabitants than in spinning yarn till that boycott is achieved. We do not see this simple obvious truth because we do not feel the necessity of this boycott. At any rate all the three methods are being tried, and there is no danger of Khadi famine if all of us would work at them to the best of our ability.

Young India, 30-5-'29

An unlimited quantity of Khadi can be manufactured without the slightest difficulty inside of one month, if the spirit of Khadi and the will to manufacture it can be created.

Skilled weavers are to be found all over India. The only problem, therefore, is that of spinning.

Spinning and the antecedent processes can be learnt inside of one week by those who have the will and the industry.

India produces more than enough cotton for all her requirements.

Therefore all those who work for boycott of foreign cloth should concentrate on Khadi production through spinning.

Young India, 24-4-'30

Picketing of foreign cloth shops has but a limited use. The real thing is the education of the masses in these matters. Better even than education is the example of workers ; and better still is teaching the people how to produce cheap Khadi through self-spinning. In practice all the three methods will go together. There must be, therefore, imparting to the people a knowledge of the economics of boycott through Khadi. People should know from well-chosen illustrations how Khadi can bring and has brought prosperity to the villages. People should come in touch with sincere workers who are habitual wearers of Khadi, and should be enabled to know how to prepare their own Khadi in their own villages. Congress workers should, therefore, have a competent knowledge of the boycott and Khadi literature, they must be honest wearers of Khadi, and they must know the cotton processes sufficiently so as to be able to instruct those who would know how to gin, card, spin or even weave.

Young India, 14-5-'31

The Khadi method is a new method in economics, as non-violence is a new method in politics. The Khadi method is bound to confound the orthodox economic theories, as non-violence has almost already confounded the orthodox political methods. The new method lends itself to the orthodox statistical demonstration only to a certain extent. It is the Khadi spirit that is responsible for the phenomenal success of the boycott. The boycott itself is no new cry. It is as old as, if not older than, the Bengal Partition period. But the hope of success was born with the re-birth of Khadi in 1919, and the hope was partly realized last year when the Khadi spirit was at its highest.

The Times of India writer suggests that the boycott is designed or calculated merely to benefit the mills to the injury of the masses. The suggestion would have foundation, if there was no Khadi behind the boycott. Let the writer and critics like him remember that the Congress formula in so many words is ' boycott through Khadi '. The

Indian mills come in to supplement Khadi. But the boycott would stand in spite of the Indian mills if they opposed Khadi.

It is for the Congress to carry on ceaseless propaganda so as to keep the mills from the profiteering temptation, and to teach the masses that their economic welfare lies in the manufacture of Khadi in their own cottages through hand-spinning. When once foreign cloth is out of the way, indigenous mills will readily suit their prices and production to Khadi, or will themselves face a boycott even like foreign mills.

Young India, 4-6-'31

SECTION FIVE: KHADI *v.* MILL CLOTH

21

MILL CLOTH IN RELATION TO KHADI

If hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi, whether cotton, wool or silk, is to be the order of the day, what is the place of mill cloth in the national economy, is the question often asked. If millions of villagers could receive, understand and take up the message of the spinning wheel today, I know that there is no room for mill cloth, whether foreign or Indian, in our domestic economy, and that the nation will be all the better for its entire disappearance.

This statement has nothing to do with machinery or with the propaganda for boycott of foreign cloth. It is purely and simply a question of the economic condition of the Indian masses.

But unless Providence comes to the rescue and miraculously and immediately drives the masses to the spinning wheel as to a haven of refuge, the Indian mills must continue to supplement the Khadi manufacture for a few years to come at any rate. It is devoutly to be wished that a successful appeal could be made to the great mill-owners to regard the mill industry as a national trust and that they should realize its proper place. The mill-owners cannot wish to make money at the expense of the masses. Even now complaints continue to come from Calcutta and elsewhere that Indian mills are charging for their *dhotis* more than Manchester although their *dhotis* are inferior to the Manchester ones. If the information is correct, it is highly unpatriotic, and such a policy of grab is likely to damage both the cause and the country.

Young India, 23-2-'22

There is no question of a permanent national boycott of mill cloth. But Indian mills alone can never supply the present demand for cloth, whereas the *charkha* and the hand-loom can. But Khadi, the product of the *charkha*, has yet to become popular and universal. It can only be so if the thinking portion of India will make the commencement. They must, therefore, restrict their use of cloth to Khadi only. Our mills need no patronage from us. Their goods are popular enough. Moreover the nation has no control over the mills. They are not philanthropic institutions. They are frankly selfish. They have their own propaganda. If they recognize the signs of the times, they will help the foreign cloth boycott movement by cheapening their cloth and taking it to areas not served at present by Khadi. They can, if they will, avoid competition with Khadi and be satisfied with supplementing it.

Young India, 22-5-'24

A correspondent writes :

> "It is not understood why you fail to realize that by insisting on the wholesale adoption of Khaddar you will be putting a large number of mill-owners and a considerably larger number of shareholders to terrible loss and distress."

I wish the correspondent's fears were realized. Then he will discover that the impending ruin of mills and shareholders of mills will be the time of their own and India's salvation. He will discover then that India will be pulsating with a new life and the middle class will be drawing their sustenance, not as now from a starving peasantry, but from prosperous farmers who would gladly exchange their produce for things they need but cannot themselves manufacture. A little reflection will enable the correspondent to realize that he and the rest of the shareholders as well as directors of mills will have to co-operate with the people before the spinning wheel is so well established as to oust the mills. Let the correspondent derive consolation from the fact that the spinning wheel has to displace nearly sixty crores worth of foreign cloth before it can touch the Indian mill cloth. But for reasons I have

stated in these pages every one of us must simply think of Khadi to the exclusion of even Indian mill cloth. Our mills need no patronage from me or anyone else. They have their own agencies and peculiar methods of advertising their wares. For those who are within the Congress beat to have the option of using mill-spun is to kill the Khadi industry. Khadi needs all the protection that can be given to it before it can produce an impression upon the market.

I invite the correspondent to think in terms of the masses and by taking to the *charkha* identify himself with his less fortunate countrymen.

If it is true, as it is true, that foreign mills have destroyed the prosperity of the masses, the consideration of humanity demands that the masses should be taught to revert to the *charkha* even though foreign mill-owners may suffer. Even so must indigenous mills suffer, if need be, for the sake of those on whose poverty their fortunes are built.

Young India, 17-7-'24

I would protect hand-spun Khadi against the home mills. But my strong belief is that Khadi will come to its own without any unseemly war with the mills. But, whilst Khadi has only a limited number of votaries, they, the votaries, must necessarily preach Khadi in preference to and to the exclusion of yarn and cloth manufactured even in our mills. To give the option is to kill Khadi.

Young India, 28-8-'24

The mills have a place in the economy of national life only to the extent that they supplement the national industry of hand-spinning in millions of our cottages. They will be a hindrance if they compete with them and supplant them.

Young India, 5-4-'28

Every yard of Khadi bought means at least 85 per cent in the mouths of the starving and the poor ones of India. Every yard of mill cloth bought means more than 75 per cent in the pockets of the capitalists — and less than 25 per

cent in the pockets of the labourers — who are never helpless, who are well able to take care of themselves, and who never starve or need starve in the sense that the helpless millions starve for whose sake Khadi has been conceived.

Young India, 4-10-'28

22

WHAT CAN OUR MILLS DO?

[Extracts]

They can standardize their prices, taking the lowest average of a number of top and lean years.

They can refrain from manufacturing those varieties that can be easily and immediately produced by Khadi organizations, thus freeing their energy for manufacturing more of the varieties they can at the present moment manufacture more easily than the Khadi organizations.

They can limit their profits to a minimum and let the surplus, if any, be devoted to the improvement of the condition of the labourers.

This would mean all-round honesty, perseverance, mutual trust, a voluntary and honourable triple alliance between labour, capital and the consumer. It would mean capacity for organization on a vast scale.

In my humble opinion we are eminently fitted for the task. The organization required for the purpose is not unfamiliar to us. The only question is, have we the will? Have the mill-owners enough vision, enough love of the country? If they have, they can take the lead.

Young India, 15-3-'28

"Only some mills will undertake not to manufacture Khadi. But what about those that only spin low counts? What is your test of Khadi?"

This is a matter of common honesty and arrangement between Khadi organizations and mills. If a workable arrangement is come to, I expect that there will be a line of demarcation for the time being between the cloth to be

manufactured by Khadi centres and mills. The manufacture of cloth will be controlled as it often is in time of war. What in a war based on violence we do by compulsion, in this war based on non-violence we shall do by choice.

"How will profits be regulated? You know as well as I do that prices of cotton fluctuate with irritating irregularity."

This assumes our inability to control the cotton market. Surely, if the largest manufacturers of the country combine in the patriotic effort, they will control the cotton market. America rules our cotton prices because we stupidly, thoughtlessly and selfishly send out our cotton. But boycott means that we shall control the movement of cotton, as we shall control many other things, if we are to achieve complete boycott, as we must, if we have developed the true national spirit and have confidence in ourselves and the nation.

"If you lay much stress upon honesty, perseverance, mutual trust, etc. you are doomed."

As I have no bayonet at my command and would not have it even if I could command it, I must press for the qualities which the friend fears are at a discount. I do not share his fear — what is more, I have patience enough to wait for the development of those qualities if they are not available in sufficient measure today. For this nation will never come to her own unless we exhibit them as a nation.

Young India, 22-3-'28

23

KHADI PROPAGANDA AIDS MILLS

The mills have never resented the Khadi propaganda. On the contrary many of their agents have assured me that they have benefited by the Khadi propaganda inasmuch as it has created an anti-foreign-cloth atmosphere enabling them to sell their comparatively coarser count cloth. Stop exclusive Khadi propaganda, play with mill cloth, and you kill Khadi, and in the long run you kill even mill cloth, for it cannot by itself stand foreign competition. In a

competition between indigenous and foreign mills the one disturbing factor of healthy mass sentiment would be wholly wanting, if there were no Khadi spirit.

Last but not least, the inestimable value of Khadi consists in its capacity for tremendous mass education, mass uplift, and substantial relief of growing starvation. Whereas mill cloth affords no work and no financial help to the masses, every yard of Khadi means so much work and money to the masses who are being doubly ruined for want of work and wages. Therefore, for every patriotic lover of the country there is no escape from exclusive use of and propaganda of Khadi.

Young India, 10-5-'28

24

MILL-OWNERS' GREED

Here are the magic figures of spurious Khadi manufactured by our mills.

Figures of the production of Khadi, Dungri, or Khaddar for ten months, April to January :

	1925-26	1926-27	1927-28
Lbs.	2,58,22,442	3,11,95,169	3,70,36,206
Yards	7,32,44,238	8,54,31,611	10,30,61,072

This shows that they manufactured one crore yards per month, meaning at least 20 lakhs of rupees worth of Khadi per month. This means a year's output of genuine Khadi. This is taking money directly out of the mouths of the poor people through a movement that was designed for helping the starving millions. Baseness could go no further. The mill-owners could have served the country, if they had made common cause with Khadi and helped it directly instead of trying to kill by unfair and dishonest competition.

Young India, 10-5-'28

25

MILL KHADI

I learnt in Madura that some dealers in cloth were palming off Khadi cloth woven from mill-spun yarn as hand-spun and hand-woven. I was shown specimens which were exact copies of special Khadi varieties. Lovers of Khadi, and Harijan servants who believe in the potency of Khadi to serve Harijans, are requested not to buy Khadi which does not bear the hall-mark of the All India Spinners' Association. I heard also that mill cloth too, both foreign and indigenous, is largely sold in the market as Khadi. And to fill my cup of woe, I am being represented as having changed my views on Khadi and having put indigenous mill cloth on a par with Khadi. This is a misrepresentation of my view of Khadi. My faith in Khadi is, if possible, stronger than ever from the moral, economic and national (in its widest sense) standpoint; there is no comparison between Khadi and mill cloth, even indigenous. Exploitation of the poor through mill cloth or mill yarn is an impossibility in the case of Khadi. Exploitation of the poor through mill cloth and mill yarn is inevitable in some shape or form, be it ever so mild. The use of genuine Khadi constitutes some (be it ever so small) automatic return to the poor for their continuous exploitation by the comparatively rich and can in the aggregate become a mighty return, though never adequate, to the masses living in the villages. None of these functions can ever be performed by mill cloth even if every mill was nationalized. In the mill industry, even if it was conducted purely as a trust for the nation and ably managed, there could never be automatic distribution and there must be displacement of a vast amount of labour. In Khadi, with the spinning wheel in every cottage, there can be no displacement of labour and there is always automatic distribution of the product of labour. Hence for me there can be no comparison between Khadi and mill cloth, there is

no juxtaposition. For, the two are not of the same kind. Khadi may never reach the finish of the mill cloth, nor its variety, nor yet its cheapness in terms of the market. The measurement for each is different. Khadi represents human values ; mill cloth represents mere metallic value. A yard of Khadi is cheap for me at 4 annas per yard. Mill cloth of the same count and taxture is too dear for me at 2 annas per yard. My plea, therefore, is for discrimination and avoidance of confusion of thought. Let each stand on its own platform. Let mill managers not grudge Khadi the place it occupies. It ill becomes them to produce cloth that looks like Khadi and thus cheat the buyers into the belief that it is Khadi.

Harijan, 9-2-'34

26

SOME POSERS

Here are some posers for lovers of Khaddar :

> "Will you kindly explain to me how the resolution passed at the Karachi Congress in connection with Khadi propaganda is going to help that object ? The indigenous mill-owners have been appealed to give their moral support to the supplementary village industry of hand-spinning by themselves using hand-spun. Now if the mill-owners enjoy the unrestricted privilege of carrying on their present mills with a view to developing them, will the mere use of hand-spun be construed into moral support to Khaddar ? In my humble opinion there is no moral support unless mill-owners discover the antagonism between mills and the *charkha* and honestly try gradually to restrict their activity. Then it passes one's comprehension how Khaddar can hold its own if mills go on producing finer and cheaper stuff to be used in place of Khaddar. Then again, asking the mill-owners to keep down the prices of cloths will be a sure means of killing Khaddar."

These are all good questions. There is no doubt that, if the personal use by mill-owners of Khaddar is not a token of their inner conviction, it is of no use and may well be a token of hypocrisy. If there is an inner conviction, they will conduct their mills so as never to harm Khaddar, even as a gardener so disposes his hardy plants as not to harm

saplings. The Congress toleration of mills is based on the belief that the mills can serve a useful purpose during the transition stage. Immediate exclusion of foreign cloth becomes easier through the indigenous mills if they work in sympathy with the movement. It is easier for Khaddar to deal and compete with the indigenous mills alone than to do so with them plus English, Japanese, Italian and other mills. The increase in the number of indigenous mills need not frighten Khaddarites. The increase is no doubt proof that the economic influence of Khaddar is not yet fully felt. When Khaddar becomes universal, many mills may find their occupation gone. It is needless to speculate whether Khaddar will obtain such a hold on the people. It will depend upon the faithfulness of the workers. There is no flaw in the reasoning applied to Khaddar. It is merely a question of giving a true education to the millions of villagers, of changing national taste, of realizing the tremendous power of the wheel to banish pauperism from the land. It is no small thing to be able to show a way the adoption of which will be an insurance against starvation and its attendant results.

As to the second poser, the necessity of the mills producing finer cloth cannot be questioned. In the Khaddar age the people had fine Khaddar. It is produced even now but not in such quantity, not so cheap as to be available to all who desire it. Again, therefore during the transition stage the mills may be encouraged to manufacture fine cloths. And it is easy enough to see that restriction of mill production to finer counts is wholly beneficial to Khaddar. The pity of it is that the mills do not respond sufficiently to the national demand.

Lastly as to the prices. Surely the writer does not suggest that mills should charge high prices in order to let Khaddar live. As the author of the revival of Khaddar I must confess that it never entered my head that I should wish for high prices of mill-manufactures for the protection of Khaddar. It is one thing to seek protection against killing competition, wholly another to wish for higher prices of

commodities produced by a few for many even for the protection of an analogous industry.

Young India, 16-7-'31

27

KHADI IN SWADESHI EXHIBITIONS

In all other parts of India where Swadeshi exhibitions permitting mill cloth are held the A.I.S.A. has as a rule refused to exhibit Khadi; and the rule has answered the purpose for which it was framed. From U.P. however, the pressure has come to relax the rule. But I have hitherto resisted the temptation. U.P. Khadi workers made a special reference for their guidance.

My own experience tells me that it is dangerous to befog the mass mind by putting Khadi in juxtaposition with the gaudy mill-made cloth. It is very like putting human beings side by side with robots. Human beings may be worsted in the competition if they allow themselves to be compared to robots. Even so will Khadi fare, in comparison with mill-made cloth. The planes of the two are different. Aims are opposite. Khadi gives work to all, mill cloth gives work to some and deprives many of honest labour. Khadi serves the masses, mill cloth is intended to serve the classes. Khadi serves labour, mill cloth exploits it. My experience is backed by that of the Khadi workers throughout India. I hope, therefore, that with Shri Jawaharlal Nehru the Congressmen of U.P. will respect the experience and the policy of the A.I.S.A. in preference to their own opinion if it be against that of the A.I.S.A.

Harijan, 10-4-'37

SECTION SIX: MILL CLOTH *v.* FOREIGN CLOTH

28

PROTECTION FOR INDIAN MILLS

Foreign cloth must be totally banished from the Indian market, if India is to become an economically free nation, if her peasantry is to be freed from chronic pauperism, if that peasantry is to find honourable employment during times of famine and such other visitations. Protection of her staple industry is her birthright. I would, therefore, protect the Indian mills against foreign competition even though for the time being it may result in mulcting the poor people. Such mulcting can take place only if the mill-owners are so unpatriotic as to raise prices owing to the monopoly they may secure. I have therefore no hesitation in advocating the repeal of cotton excise duties and imposition of a prohibitive import duty.

Young India, 28-8-'24

29

FOREIGN CLOTH BOYCOTT BY MILLS

A friend, intimately connected with mills and desirous of having our mills contributing their full quota to the foreign cloth boycott movement, asks:

> "On what basis do you want prices standardized? For remember all mills are not alike. Some are bad, some are good; some use more sizing than others, some have more reserve than others; Bombay mills make less profits than upcountry ones. These differences are illustrative of many others that might be stated."

The one general answer that may be given is: "Where there's a will there's a way." The mills will contribute their quota only when they get rid of inertia, think

furiously, and that too in terms of the nation, not merely the pockets of shareholders, directors or agents. But by way of making my position in this matter clearer, I may say that all the mills who will join the boycott movement will have to pool all the differences and arrive at a standard price which would at least mean a large slice off from the present profits of at least some mills. If their patriotism is sound and progressive, the flourishing ones will cover the losing ones, avoidable differences will be avoided. In the scheme I have in view the mills need never lose in the aggregate, and they must not profit at the expense of the buyer.

Young India, 22-3-'28

It is my firm belief that mills, by reason of the limitations under which they must work, will fail us in the end if we rely upon them. Then they, being concerns predominantly for making profits irrespective of national considerations, will not scruple to exploit the public and even to sell foreign cloth as Swadeshi. I have already exposed in these pages the fraudulent sale of mill cloth under the name of Khadi. Lastly, all mills are not Swadeshi because they have their habitation in India, as the existing Government is not Swadeshi for the mere fact of its habitation being in India. Some of them are foreign in every sense of the term. They are administered by foreigners on behalf exclusively of foreign shareholders with foreign capital. They are here merely to exploit the resources of the country. The only thing they reluctantly contribute is to employ the cheap labour of the country and make a gullible public believe that these are Swadeshi concerns.

But this does not mean that the mills will play no part in the boycott campaign. They will, but it will be involuntary and fortuitous. Congressmen will not be able at once to reach every village of India. We will reach the towns and the villages surrounding them. The mills reach every village of India, The atmosphere created in the country will throw the villagers into the arms of the mill-owners' agents, and they will buy whatever is given to them by

the mills under the name of Swadeshi. Congressmen will have to be on the watch regarding their operations. But it will wholly depend upon the determination of the people to boycott foreign cloth at any cost and replace it by genuine Khadi. Khadi has no limits. For we have millions of human spindles and lakhs of human looms. The one thing needful is the will to do it.

Young India, 7-3-'29

Although I have before now dealt with this question in these pages, correspondents often inquire why the indigenous mills are not invited to take part in the foreign cloth boycott movement.

Immediate boycott through the existing mills is an impossibility. New mills cannot be started for the asking. Therefore, if the boycott is to succeed, it can do so only through Khadi. Khadi cannot be pushed side by side with mill cloth. Given the choice, it must be confessed with regret that the unthinking multitude will prefer the apparently cheaper and easily obtainable calico to the apparently dearer and coarse-looking and not easily obtainable Khadi. It follows, therefore, that Congress workers, as far as their influence can reach — and it does not reach very far yet — must preach Khadi to the exclusion of mill cloth.

Here are the conditions under which mills can directly participate in the (foreign cloth boycott) * movement wholly or partially :

1. They can sell Khadi through their agencies ;
2. They can lend their talents to the movement ;
3. They can, by conference with the A.I.S.A., determine the varieties they should manufacture in terms of (foreign cloth) * boycott ;
4. They can cease to manufacture Khadi whether in that name or any other ;
5. They can standardize their prices so as neither to suffer loss nor to increase their profits ; and
6. They can render financial assistance to the (foreign cloth boycott) * movement.

* Words in brackets are ours. — Ed.

Several other ways may easily be deduced from the six chief ones I have mentioned. This assistance can be given only if the mill-owners and the shareholders are patriotically inclined and are prepared to limit their profits. I am sure the majority of shareholders, if they were properly canvassed, would not object.

Young India, 4-7-'29

Mill-owners can, if they will, help boycott through Khadi by publishing the list of those mills which are owned, controlled and managed by Indians, which use no foreign yarn at all in weaving, and which will not manufacture cloth corresponding to Khadi, will not use the name of Khadi or the wheel on their labels, and will not inflate prices.

I am convinced that those who merely carry on boycott propaganda without insisting on boycotters contributing towards Khadi production by themselves spinning or procuring spinners and who talk loosely of Swadeshi retard the boycott movement if they do not actually harm it. Boycotters must not stray away from their path even though for the moment they are unable to satisfy the demand for Khadi. Let them know that that very moment is the one most propitious for Khadi production. We need boycott of foreign cloth not to punish Englishmen but to bring work and therefore food through the wheel to the starving millions.

Young India, 24-4-'30

30

MY POSITION

My position is clear.

1. If I had my way, India would be clothed in Khadi to the exclusion of all other cloth, even made in indigenous mills.

2. Whilst India is unwilling (there is no question of inability) to manufacture all the Khadi she needs, I should allow indigenous mill cloth to supplement it.

3. There is picketing of foreign cloth because foreign cloth competes with both Khadi and Indian mill cloth. It is irrelevant whether the competition is fair or unfair in the sense whether the cloth manufactured in the respective countries is fairly produced and brought here or not.

4. If there was no competition, and if it became clear that some foreign cloth had to come to India, and if England was in partnership with India freed, I would give preference to England over all other countries. But my belief is that when India becomes free she will manufacture within a short time enough Khadi for her wants, supplementing it during the transition with indigenous mill cloth.

Young India, 30-7-'31

SECTION SEVEN: THE ECONOMICS OF KHADI

31

HUMAN CONSIDERATIONS THE BASIS

To give up Khadi would be to sell the masses, the soul of India.

Young India, 15-1-'28

Khaddar economics is wholly different from the ordinary. The latter takes no note of the human factor. The former wholly concerns itself with the human. The latter is frankly selfish, the former necessarily unselfish. Competition and therefore prices are eliminated from the conception of Khaddar. There is no competition between hotels and domestic kitchens. It never enters into the head of the queen of the house to calculate the cost of her labour, the floor space, etc. She simply knows that to conduct the domestic kitchen is as much her duty as it is to bring up children. If she were to count the cost, the logic of facts would irresistibly drive her to the destruction of her kitchen as well as her children. Some have done both. But thank God the cult makes no promise of appreciable increase. It is our innate laziness which prevents us from seeing that we sinned against Indian humanity when we destroyed the domestic wheel. Let us repent of our sin and return to the peace-giving wheel.

Young India, 16-7-'31

32

LAWS OF KHADI ECONOMICS

I have found that the time has come for Khadi workers to emphasize more than ever before the necessity of greater concentration on the observance of the laws of Khadi economics. Some of them are essentially different from those that govern the general economics. Thus, as a rule, articles manufactured in one place are sent, or attempted to be sent, to all parts of the world. Those who manufacture the articles need not use them at all. Not so with Khadi. Its peculiarity is that it has to be used where it is produced and preferably by the spinners and weavers themselves. Thus the demand for Khadi when thus used is automatically assured. No doubt this idea will never be reached. But the worth of Khadi will always be measured by the extent to which the ideal is reached. Khadi is a cottage industry in this special sense in which no other industry is or can be, except agriculture in a restricted sense, if agriculture may be regarded as an industry. Therefore it is necessary to educate the spinners and weavers to appreciate the simple economics of Khadi. Where cloth is spun and woven by the spinners and weavers for their own use, it is naturally cheapest for them.

It follows that we must not seek to send Khadi for sale far away from its place of manufacture. The surplus Khadi should be sold in the village where it is manufactured. If there is still a surplus, it should be sold in the district of its manufacture. Special varieties will no doubt continue to be manufactured by those families which have woven artistic patterns from time immemorial. That sort of Khadi will live, no matter what befalls the villagers' Khadi, which is meant as a perennial source of labour and income for them.

The foregoing does not mean a revolution in the immediate administration of the A.I.S.A. Its depots will go on as usual. But it does mean a revolution in the thought

world. The best mind of Khadi workers will concentrate itself upon the village Khadi, upon its style and durability, to suit the taste of the villagers. There will thus have to be a better and more real bond between ginners, carders, spinners and weavers on the one hand, and the Khadi workers on the other. There will be no feverish anxiety to increase the sales in town. These sales will be regulated according to the demand of town-dwellers and the propaganda conducted by Khadi lovers, who will not or cannot directly reach the villagers but who will not be satisfied till they have sold some Khadi on behalf of the poor spinners and weavers. Let this be borne in mind that Khadi can be permanent only when it has obtained a permanent footing as village wear.

Harijan, 27-4-'34

33

COTTON CULTIVATION

A correspondent suggests that there should be a widespread movement to induce cotton cultivators to store a quantity of cotton for themselves to be converted into hand-spun yarn and finally into Khadi for their own use. He also suggests that in non-cotton areas individual peasants should be encouraged to grow enough cotton as they grow vegetables for their own requirements. The correspondent contends that, if this becomes popular, it will cheapen Khadi for the peasantry. He says that in some parts of the South before the Khadi movement came, there were cultivators who followed this method.

There is much force in the correspondent's suggestion. The experiment of inducing cotton cultivators to retain sufficient cotton for their own needs is being tried in Bijolia (Rajputana), Bardoli and Kathiawad. But it has been found difficult in Kathiawad for the cultivators to resist the temptation of selling stored cotton when prices ruled high. This is not possible, until the cultivators

appreciate the economics of Khadi, and the fact that labour spent upon cotton during their leisure hours in subjecting it to the processes antecedent to weaving will bring about the same result that they achieve by selling cotton at a high price, and will in addition free themselves from the clutches of the speculator. This means that the All India Spinners' Association will have to educate the cultivators in the economics of Khadi. There is no doubt that in order to overtake all the branches of Khadi work it is necessary for Khadi workers to come in close touch with the cotton growers, because even for buying cotton for the manufacture of Khadi for town consumption it would be necessary to come in touch with the cotton growers, and buy from them direct instead of buying in the market as is being done at present. If we would be independent of the speculator and the fluctuations of the cotton market and stabilize the price of Khadi, we shall have to come in touch with the cultivator and induce him to deal with us directly. The greater the progress of Khadi the more shall we find that our methods have to be far different from those hitherto adopted by the commercial world, which believes in selling at the highest price obtainable and buying at the cheapest rate possible. The world commerce at the present moment is not based upon equitable considerations. Its maxim is, 'Buyers beware'. The maxim of Khadi economics is 'Equity for All'. It therefore rules out the present soul-killing competitive method. Khadi economics are designed in the interest of the poorest and the helpless, and Khadi will be successful only to the extent that the workers permeate the masses and command their confidence. And the only way of commanding their confidence is doing selfless work among them.

Young India, 27-10-'27

34

PRICES

Life is more than money. It is cheaper to kill our aged parents who can do no work and who are a drag on our slender resources. It is also cheaper to kill our children whom we do not need for our material comfort and whom we have to maintain without getting anything in return. But we kill neither our parents nor our children, but consider it a privilege to maintain them, no matter what their maintenance costs us. Even so must we maintain Khadi to the exclusion of all other cloth. It is the force of habit which makes us think of Khadi in terms of prices. We must revise our notion of Khadi economics. And when we have studied them from the point of view of the national wellbeing, we shall find that Khadi is never dear. We must suffer dislocation of domestic economy during the transition stage.

At present we are labouring under a heavy handicap. Cotton production has been centralized for the sake of Lancashire and, if you will, for the sake of Indian mills. Prices of cotton are determined by the prices in foreign lands. When the production of cotton is distributed in accordance with the demands of Khadi economics, cotton prices will not fluctuate and, in any case, will be, in effect, lower than today. When the people, either through State protection or through voluntary effort, have cultivated the habit of using only Khadi, they will never think of it in terms of money, even as millions of vegetarians do not compare the prices of flesh foods with those of non-flesh foods. They will starve rather than take flesh foods even though these foods may be offered free.

Harijan, 10-12-'38

35

FROM A TALK TO KHADI WORKERS

In reorganizing your Khadi production you should not forget that the science of Khadi in some respects works on lines diametrically opposite to that of ordinary business. You know how Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, after laying down certain principles according to which economic phenomena are governed, went on to describe certain other things which constituted the 'disturbing factor' and prevented economic laws from having free play. Chief among these was the 'human element'. Now it is this 'human element' on which the entire economics of Khadi rests; and human selfishness, Adam Smith's 'pure economic motive', constitutes the 'disturbing factor' that has got to be overcome. What applies to the production of mill cloth, therefore, does not apply to Khadi. Debasing of quality, adulteration, pandering to the baser tastes of humanity, are current staple in commercialized production; they have no place in Khadi, nor has the principle of highest profit and lowest wages any place in Khadi. On the contrary there is no such thing as pure profit in Khadi. And there should be no loss. Loss there is, because we, the workers, are still incompetent novices. In Khadi the prices realized return to the prime producers, the spinners, the others getting no more than their hire.

Then take the question of standardization. You cannot enforce it in Khadi. As Rajagopalachari once remarked, a poor ordinary spinner cannot always spin thread of a uniform quality. She is not a machine. Today she may be unwell, tomorrow her child may be ill and her mind may be distracted. If you have love for the poor spinner or her child, you will not insist on having smooth, even thread always, but be satisfied with what she can give, so long as she gives her best in the condition in which she finds herself at the moment. The sacred touch of her hand gives

life and history to Khadi which the machine-made yarn can never give. The art that is in the machine-made article appeals only to the eye ; the art in Khadi appeals first to the heart and then to the eye. I would therefore deprecate the bleaching of Khadi. It adds to the cost of production, affects the durability of cloth, and makes the detection of fraud ever so much more difficult. We must not pamper the popular fancy, but seek to cultivate a new taste. A few washes in the ordinary course will suffice to make Khadi perfectly white and give it a softness which bleaching destroys. We must make everybody contribute his or her mite to reduce all unnecessary cost.

Converting the Spinner

If then we treat Khadi not as an article of commerce but as one necessary for the sustenance of semi-starved millions, we must penetrate the spinner's home and induce her to wear Khadi made from her own yarn. This at once reduces the cost of production and ensures automatic distribution. So far we have simply tried to manufacture Khadi for the city people. From insignificant beginnings the production of Khadi has grown to several lakhs per year. We have multiplied varieties. But that does not satisfy me now. Khadi was conceived with a much more ambitious object, i.e. to make our villages starvation-proof. This is impossible unless the villagers will wear Khadi themselves, sending only the surplus to the cities. The singular secret of Khadi lies in its saleability in the place of its production and use by the manufacturers themselves.

Overhead Charges

Our overhead charges are today much too high for me. If we concentrate attention on the central mission of Khadi, they will be considerably reduced. The rules governing the reduction of the price of Khadi are somewhat, if not wholly, different from those that apply to purely commercial articles produced chiefly for profit. In Khadi there is a limitation to the improvement of tools.

But there is no limitation to the improvement of human intelligence and honesty. If we despair of these two, we must despair of Khadi. In Khadi therefore, we reduce cost by eliminating middlemen as far as is consistent with the smooth running of the organization, which itself will be unnecessary when Khadi is self-supporting and self-acting.

The science of Khadi is still in its infancy. It is a developing science. With every new discovery that I make in it, the realization comes to me all the more vividly how little I know of that science.

Harijan, 21-9-'34

SECTION EIGHT: THE SCIENCE OF KHADI

36

WHAT IS KHADI SCIENCE?

I have often said that, if Khadi is a sound economic proposition, it is also a science and a romance. Everything can be turned into a science or a romance if there is a scientific or a romantic spirit behind it. Some people scoff at Khadi and betray signs of impatience or disgust when one talks of hand-spinning. But it ceases to be an object of disgust or ridicule immediately you attribute to it the power of removing India-wide idleness, unemployment and consequent pauperism. It need not be, as a matter of fact, a panacea for the three ills. To be absorbingly interesting, the mere honest attributing of the power is enough. But you cannot attribute that potency to Khadi and pursue it as some do in the manner of an ignorant needy artisan who gins, cards, spins or weaves because he must for his bread. A believer in its potency will pursue it in a deliberate, wise, methodical manner and in a scientific spirit, taking nothing for granted, testing every proposition, checking facts and figures, undaunted by defeats, unelated by petty successes, never satisfied till the goal is reached.

A science to be science must afford the fullest scope for satisfying the hunger of body, mind and soul. Sceptics have wondered how Khadi can afford such satisfaction or, in other words, what I mean when I use the expression 'science of Khadi'. I cannot better answer the question than by copying below the questions framed by me hurriedly for a Khadi worker who offered to be examined by me. The questions were neither framed in their logical sequence nor were they exhaustive. They admit of re-arrangement and addition. But I reproduce a translation, made for me by a friend, of the original in Hindustani.

Part I

1. How much cotton is produced in India and where ? Name the varieties. How much remains in India, how much is spun by hand, how much goes to England and other lands ?

2. (a) What quantity of cloth is manufactured in Indian mills ? How much of it is used in India and how much is exported ?

(b) Of the above how much is manufactured from Swadeshi mill yarn, and how much from foreign mill yarn ?

(c) How much cloth is imported ?

(d) What quantity of Khadi is produced in India ?

Note: Give your answers in square yards and in terms of money.

3. Discuss the merits and demerits of the three kinds of cloth above mentioned.

4. Some say Khadi is dear, coarse, and not lasting. Give your answers to these complaints, and where there is foundation for any of them offer your solution.

5. In the (A. I. S. A.) Khadi work how many spinners are engaged ? How much have they earned during all these years ? Give the number of mill spinners and their total annual earnings.

6. (a) How is the work of the A. I. S. A. carried on ? How much is spent by them on administration ?

(b) What staff is employed in the running of a Swadeshi mill, and what proportion of wages do such persons get in comparison with the mill hands ?

7. (a) What place, in your opinion, does clothing occupy in the necessaries of life ?

(b) Name the chief necessaries of life and give their proportionate percentages.

8. If everyone in India gave up wearing mill-made cloth, whether foreign or Indian, how much money would remain in India and to whom would it go ?

9. What does India export in place of the cloth she imports? What loss, if any, does India sustain through this exchange?

10. What percentage of the population is able to buy cloth?

11. What is the percentage of those who have the leisure to make their own cloth? And how?

12. 'Khadi will establish perfect economic balance.' Is this statement really correct? Give reasons for your answer.

13. If Khadi became universal, what effect would this have on trade, occupation and transport, and in what manner?

14. Assuming that for another 50 years Khadi does not become universal, what is likely to be the effect on the economic condition of our people?

Part II

1. Give a description of current Indian spinning wheels. Which is the best amongst them? Give drawings of any four spinning wheels and the correct measurement of each constituent part. State the species of wood employed, the length and the girth of the spindle, and the thickness of the *mal*.

2. Compare the current *charkhas* with the Yeravda wheel in the matter of speed, cost and general advantages.

3. How would you ascertain the variety of cotton, the strength of the yarn, and the count of spun yarn?

4. Of what count and strength is the yarn you spin? What is your speed on the *takli* and the wheel? Which wheel do you generally use?

5. How much cloth does a man and a woman require respectively for his or her clothing? How much yarn is required for making the same, and how much time is necessary for spinning it?

6. How much yarn is required to clothe one family ? How much cotton is needed to produce the above ? How much land is required for growing the necessary amount of cotton ?

(A family consists of a father, mother and three children — one girl and two boys, 7, 5, and 3 years old.)

7. Compare the current carding bow with the new ones. How much do you card per hour ? How can you judge whether the cotton is properly carded or not ? How long does it take you to make one pound of slivers ? How many slivers do you make from one *tola* of cotton ?

8. How much cotton can you gin in one hour ? Compare ginning by hand with ginning by machine, giving the respective merits and demerits of either process. Describe and give a drawing of the current hand-ginning machine.

9. Give the length of the yarn of 20 counts required to weave one yard of cloth 36 inches wide.

10. Compare the pit loom with the shuttle loom.

Harijan, 16-1-'37

In the previous article I tried to explain what should be covered by the science of Khadi. In my opinion it should be made obligatory on every Khadi worker engaged in any of the production centres of the A.I.S.A. to know the elements of this science. Shri Lakshmidas is a Khadi lover and one of the most careful students of the science of Khadi that we have. But I would not call even him a master of the science. In the course of a letter which he addressed me in November 1936, he laid down what he considered to be the minimum test which every Khadi worker ought to satisfy. The test is reproduced below :

1. The worker should know how to distinguish between superior and inferior grades of cotton, cotton-seed and lint.

2. He should be able to fix in position the rolling pin of a hand-ginning machine and to make the necessary correction and adjustment to make it exactly fit with the fixed

roller, when the former happens to be bent or of unequal thickness.

3. He should be able to fit up a carding bow and to prepare the gut and the hide piece for the shoulder-blade.

4. He should be able to show a ginning speed of five pounds an hour on a hand-ginning machine over a period of four hours.

5. He must show a carding speed of ten *tolas* of cotton wool per hour, excluding the time required for making slivers.

6. He must know the construction of every type of spinning wheel and how to assemble it. He must be able to straighten a spindle gone out of shape and to prepare the *mal*, and the *daman*, the cross bands of the motor wheel.

7. He must be able to maintain a spinning speed of 300 rounds (400 yards) of yarn of 20s, with a tensile strength of over 80 per cent and of evenness 95 per cent, in a four hours' test.

8. He should know the Andhra process of spinning and must be able to spin 200 rounds of 70s to 80s, strength 80 per cent and evenness 95 per cent, during a two hours' test.

9. He should know the construction of a pit-loom as well as a fly-shuttle-loom and be able to prepare together the reeds, the healds and the sizing brush.

10. He should be able to weave Khadi of 50″ width on a fly-shuttle-loom from yarn of 20s, and to make all necessary adjustments to produce at least five different kinds of border designs for *saris*.

11. The speed of weaving should come up to one square yard in an hour from yarn of 20s.

12. He should know all about the growing of different varieties of cotton, and should be able to get hand-gins, carding bows, spinning wheels, looms, and their accessories locally prepared, preferably out of local material. This would involve a knowledge of :

(a) Rainfall, its extent and distribution over different parts of the year, and a knowledge of manures and the nature of the soil.

(b) Different kinds of wood and of calculations relating to measurement.

(c) A workable knowledge of drawing for the abovementioned needs.

13. A knowledge of carpentry sufficient for repairing the various machines.

It is not quite easy to fulfil this test. But given sufficient earnestness and measure of diligence, any one who has had a fair education in this should be able to satisfy Shri Lakshmidas's test. That would, however, still leave uncovered the commercial aspects of the science of Khadi. That is covered by the questions drawn up by me. The syllabus prepared by Shri Lakshmidas is calculated to cover the technical side. One must be an adept in both these fields before he can be said to be versed in the elements of the science of Khadi.

Harijan, 13-2-'37

The first essential condition for anyone who wants to become master of any subject is to have a living faith in it. He must next have the eagerness to learn and readiness to make the necessary sacrifice for its sake. Books, teachers and other accessories of education are of course necessary in a more or less degree, but passion for knowledge and eagerness to learn are the most essential of all. Given these the other things will follow of themselves. I would therefore suggest to these intending students of the Khadi science that they can at once make a beginning by finding out what processes relative to Khadi production are being carried out in their immediate neighbourhood, and picking up all the useful information with regard to them available there. The main task that faces a student of the Khadi science today is collation and co-ordination of personal experience. A number of different processes relating to the production of Khadi are today in vogue in different parts of the country. But there is no single person today who

fully knows all of them. And yet a complete, detailed knowledge of all these different processes is necessary before the science of Khadi can be developed. The task is obviously beyond the compass of a single individual. But if there are a number of persons who are truly fired by a scientific spirit of research and they apply themselves to the task in a systematic manner, they will by pooling their talents and experience be able to evolve a living, growing science of Khadi in a short time. But before they can do that, they will need to have themselves collectively mastered all the processes of Khadi production that are in vogue in the country today.

To take a concrete instance, several varieties of Khadi are produced in different parts of Andhra today, employing different methods of carding. Now any Khadi worker in Andhra who is anxious to acquire the science of Khadi can begin by mastering all these various methods. For this he need not quit his province. Let him by way of a start pick up the process which is current in his immediate neighbourhood. A scientific study of carding would, of course, include a knowledge of the construction of the carding bow on the part of the student. He would further need to know the materials from which the gut string and other component parts of a carding bow are made and how ; what exactly the length of a carding bow should be in order to yield the best results, and the effects of departure from the standard length ; where precisely the stroke on the bow-string should be delivered and the reason why, and so on in respect of a host of other questions about which even the best of our professional carders today know little and care even less. Similarly with regard to cotton a worker who takes up a study of carding as a science would need to know all about the different varieties of cotton ; the length, strength, and fineness of their respective fibres, the various processes through which it has to pass before it reaches his hands ; where is it grown ; what is the yield per acre and the total money value of the crop ; what is the extent of the area under cotton ; what

was the crop grown there previously which has been displaced, or was the area under question lying fallow before; what difference would it make to the cultivator if another crop were substituted in place of cotton, etc. Thus his practical experience will be illumined by scientific knowledge and give him such a firm grip of his subject and an insight into its intricacies that to master the other processes of carding prevailing in different parts of Andhra will become camparatively an easy thing for him and take but little time. If, further, he keeps regular notes of his experiments and experiences, they will in time take the place of an authoritative treatise on the science of carding.

It will be thus seen that no Khadi worker need leave his field of work in order to learn the science of Khadi. If he is fired by the spirit of inquiry and has patience and capacity for concentrated application in a sufficient measure, he will, by applying himself to an intensive study of the processes for which his neighbourhood offers special facilities, not only become a specialist in those particular processes but also gradually widen the scope of his knowledge so as to deserve the name science.

Harijan, 10-4-'37

37

NEED FOR EXACTNESS

A correspondent sends a newspaper cutting containing a notice in praise of Khadi. From it I take the following relevant paragraphs:

> "A rupee spent on foreign cloth means one anna and a half to Indians, while annas fourteen plus half an anna go direct into foreign trade's growth.
>
> A rupee spent on mill cloth means half the amount for the mill-owner, annas six to instruments of production, and two annas into foreigners' pockets.
>
> A rupee spent on Khadi means the whole of the amount minus management expenses — one anna — to the producer alone."

The sender asks if it is true that every rupee invested in Khadi means fifteen annas going to the producers and

only one anna going to the salesmen. I can only answer that the ideal set before the managers in charge of the A.I.S.A. stores is that the prices should be so regulated as to show on the total sales a surplus, in order to cover expenses, of one anna for every fifteen annas worth of Khadi received from the producing depot. The fifteen annas will, therefore, include several other items, e.g. freight, etc. Hence it is altogether wrong to say that of every rupee invested in Khadi fifteen annas go to the producer.

After Khadi leaves the weavers' hands it undergoes many processes — washing, dyeing, calendering, storing in intermediate depots, and so on. If the term 'producer' is confined to the grower, the picker, the ginner, the carder, the sliver-maker, the spinner, the bobbin-winder, the warper, the sizer and the weaver, but not the workers of the processes after weaving, the producer gets probably no more than eight annas in the rupee. It is usual and proper to exclude the other processes, as they are not necessary for fulfilling the purpose of Khadi, and may or may not have been done by villagers or workers properly so-called. Washing, dyeing, etc. are often done through organized, i.e. capitalist concerns. Now all those who contribute to the increase in the selling price of Khadi do not divide the wages with the producer, in other words, do not take the bread out of the mouth of the producer, but help him to find a market for his manufacture, and this they do even when they are capitalist concerns. For, the latter do not at present work for their profit, but work, no matter from what motive, for the sake of the producer. Therefore, the whole truth seems to me to be more conducive to the advertisement of Khadi than the undoubted, though unconscious or ignorant, exaggeration in the notice under discussion. If I was the draftsman of the notice, I should say :

"When you buy a rupee worth of Khadi, know that the producer retains the full fruit of his labour, whereas, when you buy cloth manufactured by indigenous mills, you wholly deprive him of that beneficial labour, without

providing him with a substitute. The agency that sells Khadi gets nothing but the bare living expenses and is, therefore, on a par with the producer."

Thus it will be found that a critical study of the economics of Khadi will show that it is a crime against semi-starved humanity for any Indian to use any cloth but Khadi. Such a person takes a morsel out of the mouth of some already famishing villager. Khadi suffers, not because of any intrinsic defect; it suffers because of the ignorance of its friends and foes alike.

But it is necessary to examine the buyer's case. The advertisement is misleading from his view-point. Khadi will sell at half the present price if he will revise his taste, i.e. if he will buy unbleached Khadi and put all the ornamentation he likes, afterwards. He need not bother his head about it, if the cost is no consideration. But let the buyer to whom cost is a consideration know that he pays much less for unbleached and unadorned Khadi than for prepared and bleached Khadi. Moreover unbleached Khadi lasts longer than bleached. The public should also know that during the past twelve years Khadi has become much cheaper and better in texture. It has put more money into the pockets of the individual spinner by improving their tools and increasing their skill. The science of Khadi requires technical and mechanical skill of a high order, and demands as much concentration as is given by Sir J. C. Bose to the tiny leaves of plants in his laboratory before he wrests from them the secrets of nature held by these fellow creatures of ours.

What is then wrong with the notice complained of is not its overvaluation of Khadi, but its clumsy and inadequate presentation of its case. And this comes from want of exactness due to inadequate appreciation of truth. Every one of the three paragraphs hopelessly fails when tested on that infallible anvil.

Harijan, 5-10-'34

38

WANTED PURCHASERS

It is easy enough to say that sales can be effected if the State protects Khadi. That Khadi deserves protection is, in my opinion, a self-proved proposition. But have the Khadi workers who have the qualifications found out whether we have done all we could to command sales even without protection ? There are two obstacles. Mill-made cloth is said to be much cheaper than Khadi, and has a variety of colour, design and finish which Khadi does not possess. The second has been largely overcome but more is perhaps required to be done. There must be a limit beyond which probably Khadi cannot go. If there is, we must frankly confess it. But my fear is that sufficient research has not been made as to the prices. The man in the street asks the question :

Why is Khadi dearer than mill cloth ? This question has to be satisfactorily answered : The obvious answers I would not consider to be satisfactory. The answers themselves have to be thoroughly examined and the way to overcome the difficulties discovered and pursued till Khadi comes to occupy its natural supremacy.

It is a shame that we who grow more cotton than we need should have to send it abroad for being turned into cloth for us. It is equally a shame for us that we who have in our villages unlimited unused labour, and can easily supply ourselves with village instruments of manufacture, should send our cotton to the mills of our cities for it to be manufactured into cloth for our use. We know the history of the shame. But we have not yet discovered the sure way to deal with the double shame beyond a patriotic appeal to the public. The latter have returned an encouraging response. But we may not be satisfied until Khadi becomes an article of universal wear. It may be that in the prosecution of our search we may find, as some suggest we shall, that

Khadi can never become an economic proposition. We should then have no hesitation in making the admission, however it may hurt our pride and demolish the propositions we have hitherto advanced with so much confidence. But the admission cannot be made till we have made every search that is possible for a human being to make so as to yield an unequivocal answer to the questions propounded by me.

Harijan, 26-8-'39

39

WHAT IT MEANS

A country whose culture is based on non-violence will find it necessary to have every home as much self-contained as possible. Indian society was at one time unknowingly constituted on a non-violent basis. The home life, i.e. the village, was undisturbed by the periodical visitations from barbarous hordes. Mayne has shown that India's villages were a congeries of republics. In them there were no ladies and gentlemen, or all were.

I cannot resist the conviction that the deficiency of our non-violence can be measured by the deficiency in our Khadi programme. Our belief in either has been half-hearted. I plead for full-hearted belief in both.

With this background, let Congressmen carefully study the following table prepared for me by Shri Krishnadas Gandhi who is among the few Khadi experts who have made a careful study of Khadi in all its aspects :

KHADI FIGURES

As per square yard

Count	Threads per inch	Square yds. of cloth per 100 yds. of yarn	Square yds. of cloth for 360 days at 100 yds. of yarn per day	YARN Yards	YARN Hanks	YARN Weight in *tolas*	COST Cotton	COST Carding	COST Spinning	COST Weaving	COST Unbleached cloth	COST Self-spun cloth	COST Self-spun and self-carded cloth
							as. p.	as. p.	as. p.	as. p.	as. p.	as. p.	as. p.
10	38	1/30	12	3,040	$3\frac{9}{16}$	$14\frac{1}{4}$	$1-10\frac{1}{5}$	$0-8\frac{1}{2}$	2–6	1–5	6–6	4–0	$3-3\frac{1}{2}$
12	40	1/32	$11\frac{1}{4}$	3,200	$3\frac{3}{4}$	$12\frac{1}{2}$	$1-6\frac{3}{4}$	$0-7\frac{1}{2}$	2–10	1–6	$6-6\frac{1}{4}$	$3-8\frac{1}{4}$	$3-0\frac{3}{4}$
14	42	1/34	$10\frac{1}{2}$	3,360	$3\frac{15}{16}$	$11\frac{1}{4}$	1–5	$0-6\frac{3}{4}$	3–1	$1-6\frac{1}{2}$	$6-7\frac{1}{4}$	$3-6\frac{1}{4}$	$2-11\frac{1}{2}$
16	45	1/36	10	3,600	$4\frac{1}{4}$	$10\frac{5}{8}$	1–4	0–6	$3-5\frac{1}{2}$	1–8	$6-11\frac{1}{2}$	3–6	3–0
20	50	1/40	9	4,000	$4\frac{11}{16}$	$9\frac{3}{8}$	*1–5	$0-8\frac{1}{2}$	$3-9\frac{1}{2}$	1–10	7–9	$3-11\frac{1}{2}$	3–3

* Calculated on a higher quality of cotton.

(For Note, see following page).

N.B.: 1. General requirements being fulfilled by cloth of 8 to 20 counts, their mean i.e. 12 counts, has been taken as the basis of our calculations below.

2. Each square yard of cloth made out of sacrificial yarn will cost As. 3-8¼ P.

3. This yarn at the rate of 100 yards per day will produce 11¼ square yards of cloth a year, i.e. ¾ of his requirements calculated at 15 square yards.

4. Making allowance for children, invalids and otherwise disabled persons, the number of able-bodied spinners may safely be taken as 40 per cent of the total population. (This of course is a conservative estimate. The correct figure would be nearer 60 per cent than 40 per cent). Hence 2/5 x 3/4 = 3/10 or near one-third of the total requirements of cloth will be produced by self-spinning and the remaining two-thirds will have to be made up by spinning on wages. The cost of a square yard of Khadi will thus amount to approximately As. 5-8 P.

The figures are an interesting study for Khadi-lovers. They are tentative and based on Krishnadas's experience. They will vary for inferior grades of cotton. But they are good enough as a workable index. Those who do not wish to take the trouble of studying the whole table should look at count 14 only. They will see that a self-spinner's Khadi will cost him a little less than 3 annas per sq. yard. I have contemplated at least half an hour's spinning per day by every Congressman. Even a novice should easily spin 100 yards in 30 minutes. Many spin 200 yards with ease during that time. Supposing the self-spinner needs 20 yards per year, he will need to spin at the most for one hour per day. Thus one-fifth of the whole population would need to spin at the most for five hours per day for yarn enough to clothe the whole of India at the rate of 20 yards per head. The present average is said to be 15 yards per head. With greater efficiency the working hours can be considerably reduced. I hold that such distributed production of Khadi requires minimum of effort and expenditure. It means voluntary co-operation on a scale never witnessed anywhere in modern times. Given the required will, the proposition is perfectly feasible.

Harijan, 9-12-'39

40

IMPROVING THE WHEEL

There is no contradiction in the authors of the spinning movement trying to secure a wheel or a machine which would enable the cottagers in their own cottages to spin more or finer yarn in the same given time as the existing spinning wheel does. This progressive method of improving home machines has been handed down from ancient times. The *takli* or the distaff was displaced by the spinning wheel. The spinning wheel itself underwent gradual improvement, as one sees even today from the different old patterns working in different provinces. The process of improvement was suddenly arrested when the spinning wheel went out of fashion. The Council of the All India Spinners' Association is, therefore, but following the course that was suddenly stopped by the machinations of the East India Company's agents. The fact is that neither the Council nor I have any objection to machines as such, but we do submit that it is wrong to carry the process of mechanization of industry so far as to kill the cottage industries and concentrate them within a narrow field ; in other words, they are against urbanization of India at the expense of her civilization and rural life.

Young India, 21-11-'29

41

KHADI STUDENTS

I have been asked to write something in regard to Khadi students of today. I have already written a little, but it cannot be too clearly stated nor enough stressed that knowledge of spinning, carding and the other processes alone does not constitute true Khadi learning. That may be termed its mechanics. To understand the inner meaning of Khadi one has to know why it has to be turned out by hand and not by power machinery. Why should innumerable hands be employed when a single person can manipulate an engine which can produce the same amount of cloth in far less time? If Khadi has to be produced by hand, why not by the *takli* only? And if the *takli*, why not the bamboo *takli*? And if we could get the necessary work by suspending yarn by means of a stone, why even a *takli*? Such questions are perfectly natural. To find proper answers to all such is a necessary part of Khadi research. I do not want to discuss these questions here. All I want to say is that true knowledge of Khadi goes far beyond the mechanical processes, and requires patient research. We have not the means of imparting such knowledge today. Therefore Khadi instructors have to improve their knowledge even whilst they are teaching. And students have to acquire knowledge through their own diligence. In olden times when no scientific knowledge was available students used to be their own teachers and became first-rate scholars and experts. We are more or less in the same position today.

Harijan, 1-3-'42

42

HOW TO DOUBLE INCOME

Though the spinning movement has been going on for the past seventeen years, and though it is giving a small but steady income to at least 1,20,000 women from year to year, the deplorable ignorance of the science of spinning on the part of workers keeps the income much lower than it need be. But cotton, badly carded and spun on a rickety wheel without regard to the revolutions of the spindle, results in a low output. Attention to details can easily double the output and therefore the income. If cotton is carefully picked, hand-ginned and well carded, there will be an increased output and improvement in the strength and evenness of yarn. Speed, strength, evenness, and count of yarn depend perhaps most upon the number of revolutions of the spindle, i.e. the turns a spindle makes for every turn of the wheel. The calculation is easily made by drawing a vertical line on the spindle disc and turning the wheel so slowly as to enable one easily to count the turns of the spindle. A spindle should never have less than one hundred revolutions against one of the wheel. But Shri Shankarlal Banker reports that during his tour he noticed spindles performing only thirty-five revolutions. No wonder if the output is miserably low and the yarn weak and fluffy. The way to increase the revolutions of a spindle is to decrease the diameter of the *sari* which keeps the *mal* in its place. Local workers should examine every wheel in their place and make the necessary changes in the spindles and other parts, wherever necessary. It may be in the end the *takli* may be found to be the best instrument of yarn production. It requires the least attention, and the new method of *takli* spinning gives an average speed of 200 rounds, i.e. 266 yards of yarn, and as much as 440 rounds per hour.

Harijan, 4-5-'35

43

SCIENTIFIC MIND AND KHADI

Scientific knowledge requires constant probing into the why and wherefore of every little process that you perform. Mere affirmation that in *charkha* there is Swaraj and peace is not enough. A scientific mind will not be satisfied with having things scientific just on faith. He will insist on finding a basis in reason. Faith becomes lame when it ventures into matters pertaining to reason. Its field begins where reason's ends. Conclusions based on faith are unshakable whereas those based on reason are liable to be unstable and vulnerable to superior logic. To state the limitation of science is not to belittle it. We cannot do without either — each in its own place.

When I first discovered the spinning wheel it was purely through intuition. It was not backed by knowledge so much so that I confused *charkha* with *kargha* i.e. handloom. Later on, however, I tried to work out its possibilities with the help of the late Maganlal Gandhi. For instance, the question arose : Why should the spindle be made of iron, not brass ? Should it be thin or thick ? What would be the proper thickness ? We began with mill spindles. Then, spindle-holders used to be bamboo and wood. Later we came to leather and gut bearings. It was found that spindles got easily bent and were difficult to straighten. So we tried to make them out of knitting needles and ultimately of umbrella wires. All this called for the exercise of the inventive faculty and scientific research.

A Khadi worker with a scientific mind will not stop there. 'Why *charkha*, why not the spinning mill ?' he will ask himself. The reply will be that everybody cannot own a spinning mill. If people depend on spinning mills for their clothing, whoever controls the spinning mills will control them and thus there will be an end to individual liberty. Today anyone can reduce the whole of London and New York to submission within 24 hours by cutting

off their electric and water supply. Individual liberty and inter-dependence are both essential for life in society. Only a Robinson Crusoe can afford to be all self-sufficient. When a man has done all he can for the satisfaction of his essential requirements he will seek the co-operation of his neighbours for the rest. That will be true co-operation. Thus a scientific study of the spinning wheel will lead on to sociology. The spinning wheel will not become a power for the liberation of India in our hands unless we have made a deep study of the various sciences related to it. It will then not only make India free but point the way to the whole world.

When a man has the scientific outlook it will be reflected in every act of his, in his eating, drinking, rest, sleep — everything will be scientifically regulated and with a full appreciation of its why and wherefore. Finally, a scientific mind must have detachment or else it will land itself in the lunatic asylum.

Harijan, 31-3-'46

44

ELOQUENT FIGURES

When Shri S. Venkateswaran, the Provincial Textile Commissioner, was in Delhi specially for the purpose of the Madras Khadi scheme, I asked him to give me his own figures on the assumption that Madras had no mills and had to clothe the whole Presidency in Khadi.

Here are the figures which speak for themselves :

" Population of Madras Province	53 millions
Number of families in the Province $\frac{53,000,000}{4}$	13.25 millions
Quantity of handspun yarn that each spinner can spin every day, working 1 hour per day	3/8 of a hank
Total quantity of yarn that will be produced per family per month of 30 working days 3/8 x 30 = 90/8	11¼ hanks

(One spinner for each family) Production of handspun yarn per family per annum	135 hanks
12 x 11¼	= 9-9/14 = 9.64 lbs. or 10 lbs. roughly equal to 30 yds. of cloth (width 44 in. average)
Total production of Khadi cloth in the Province	30 x 13.25 = 397.5 million yards.
Quantity of Khadi cloth required for clothing the entire population at 20 yards per adult and 10 yards per child	
37 million x 20	= 740 million yards
16 million x 10	= 160 million yards
	900 million yards
Percentage of production to the requirements of cloth	44.1%

"It seems to follow that we cannot get enough hand-spun yarn for meeting the cloth requirements in full unless each family contributes a spinner working, in the average, for about 2½ hours daily, or unless we can secure about five spinners for every two families in the Province.

"**Handlooms required:** On the assumption that an average weaver, even after due training, cannot weave more than five yards daily, or 125 yards per month (allowing five days every month for festivals and other days of rest), the number of looms required for the production of 900 million yards is 6,00,000. The number of handlooms weaving cotton yarn in this Province now is only a little over 5,00,000. The number of cotton yarn looms will, therefore, have to be increased by at least 75,000 to make the Province self-sufficient in terms of Khadi."

Is it extravagant to expect every five persons out of eight to spin one hour per day, say for love of the country of their birth?

Harijan, 27-10-'46

SECTION NINE: KHADI WORKERS

45

FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

We have taken Khadi to be rooted in truth and non-violence. If we forget this fundamental and go on producing Khadi in any way we like, a time will come when we shall ourselves be destroying it. If we do not hold on to our fundamentals it will result in our degeneration. It is the duty of the workers to see that there is purity in every part of the Khadi work. I do not expect today that our spinners will all be devotees of truth and non-violence; but I certainly expect this of our three thousand Khadi workers. If they are not so our work will not progress and we shall perish.

(From Hindi)

The Ideology of the Charkha, p. 81 (December, 1941)

Khadi workers will with unremitting zeal investigate the laws governing the science of Khadi and seek to make it more durable, more attractive, and believe themselves to be responsible for discovering the means of making Khadi universal. God helps only those who are ever watchful and who devote all their talents to their mission.

Harijan, 10-12-'38

Every member of the Khadi service should know the processes through which cotton passes before it becomes Khadi.

Harijan, 6-7-'35

Workers have to respond to the lead that the centre may give from time to time, and they have also to anticipate the objections of the villagers whom they have to

serve. For that purpose they have to come into closest touch with them. Their approach must be accompanied by sympathy and trust. They may never appear before the villagers as patrons, but they should appear as voluntary servants who have hitherto neglected their trust. Given a due fulfilment of this primary indispensable condition, the rest will follow as night follows day.

Harijan, 24-8-'35

46

NO ROOM FOR PARTY POLITICS

Khaddar in a sense is purely an economic proposition. A Khaddar organization must be a business concern before everything else. The democratic principle (of party politics), therefore, cannot apply to it. Democracy necessarily means a conflict of will and ideas, involving sometimes a war to the knife between these different ideas. There can be no room for such conflict within a business organization. Imagine parties, groups and the like in a business concern. It must break to pieces under their weight. But a Khadi organization is more than a business concern. It is a philanthropic institution designed to serve demos. Such an institution cannot be governed by popular fancy. There is no room in it for personal ambition.

Harijan, 21-9-'34

An A.I.S.A. agent asks what he is to say to his co-workers who have formed a union and presented him with terms. I regard the formation of such unions a fallacy. The workers have evidently missed the scope and the message of the A.I.S.A. It is a philanthropic organization formed by the Congress and has been given an autonomous charter for the specific purpose of developing the central village industry of hand-spinning and all it implies. Those who are engaged in this voluntary organization not only derive no pecuniary advantage from it but are expected,

if they can, to give their labour free of any hire. And since in this, the poorest country in the world, many persons cannot do so, a large number are paid an emolument only enough to sustain them. Whilst every attempt is made to make them comfortable, they are not regarded as employees in the ordinary sense. There are no profits shared by anyone. If there are shareholders or proprietors, they are the spinners, weavers and the like. Even the consumers are not beneficiaries. They are expected to wear Khadi not because it is cheaper or better to look at than mill cloth, but because it gives employment to the largest number of half-starved, half-employed persons, mostly women. The whole of the takings go to these dumb artisans after deducting the salaries and other expenses incurred in running this vast philanthropic organization.

If, therefore, any body of workers form unions as against the Association, they are against the artisans. What they take, has to come out of the pockets of the artisans or the consumers. It would be manifestly absurd to tax the consumers in the interest of the workers. Will they, the workers, not realize that the agents are themselves as much workers as they themselves? In several cases the agents are purely honorary. It is of course a different thing where an agent is found to be going beyond his sphere of duty and acting as if he was the lord and master of, instead of being co-worker with, the men working with and under him. In such a case the workers have their remedy through the central office but surely not through unions after the orthodox style. In the one case they are a necessity, in the other they are not only superfluous, but they are, as I have said above, a fallacy and, if persisted in on a wide scale, they may kill the Association of which they are part creators and trustees.

Harijan, 16-7-'38

47

KHADI, VILLAGE INDUSTRIES AND VILLAGE UPLIFT

I admit, that if a Khadi worker's entire time is employed in Khadi work, he cannot possibly attend to either village uplift or industry. Three persons would be required for the three tasks. My idea is that in a well-organized village one person should suffice. For example, one worker may devote two hours to taking in yarn, distributing slivers and spinning tools, and sales of Khadi ; village industry work might take even less, and the remainder of the time he could give to village uplift and general education. This has not till now been possible because the Khadi worker's time has been devoted to teaching people how to spin etc. But now the time has come when Khadi and village products, locally produced, must also be locally absorbed. In that case one person will be able to do all the work. Today it suffices to say that all this work is complementary — and must become one as far as possible. The amalgamation cannot be imposed ; it must be a natural growth. I do not, I cannot, apportion any blame to anyone for the existing position. Our plans have progressed as far as our intelligence and experience could have taken them. The creation of Khadi Vidyalayas is meant to expand and improve the technique of work. We shall learn from them how all departments of village work can be amalgamated.

Harijan, 31-5-'42

48

WORKER AND MONEY

Today the workers of the A.I.S.A. are spread throughout India. Their number is about 3,000. I consider this a small number. When Khadi becomes universal in India the number of these workers will increase immensely. If there be one for every village there will be seven lakhs of workers on the rolls of the Spinners' Association. This will require enormous funds. But this need not deter us. If the work is beneficial and the people value it, money will be available. I have been organizing and conducting institutions throughout my life. In my experience no institution had to close down or curtail its work for want of finance. On the other hand, if institutions had to be closed, or had to curtail their work, it was because of lack of workers. In reply it may be asked, "What, if not money, is the attraction for employment in big business concerns and Government services?" Those alone who have not fully understood what I said above can raise such an objection. I did not say that nothing could be achieved by money. How could people be slaves to money if it were not capable of securing many results? What I meant to say was that if we were slaves of money we should give up the idea of serving the people. It is the fate of the slave to be oppressed. But if we use money only as a means, taking it to be our servant, and that too with the service motive, then we shall make proper use of it. A good worker is the first and indispensable requirement for service of the people. When there are such workers, money follows and they need not go in search of it. Therefore I said that even if we got seven lakhs more workers we could take it that money would be forthcoming. It is true that we do not have money to attract people to our work. I admit this. It is the spirit and devotion to the cause that must attract them. Those who join a philanthropic institution like the A.I.S.A. should do so with the service motive and not for pay. If they have to be paid a little, it is because the poor even as the rich have to feed

themselves. But the worker receives pay only to live and keep himself fit for service. Such workers never eat or drink or wear clothes for pleasure or for fashion.

(From Hindi)

The Ideology of the Charkha, pp. 85, 86; 3-11-'45

49

KHADI WORKERS AND POLITICS

Khadi workers can find no time to take part in politics. The A.I.S.A. cannot fulfil its function if its workers work only for eight hours and spend the rest of their time in pleasure and other diversions. It is they who will make or mar the A.I.S.A. Therefore they will have to use their spare time in becoming proficient and in qualifying themselves better for their work by studying the various processes of making Khadi, and by studying its science and technique.

This does not, however, mean that the workers of the A.I.S.A. will have no interest in politics or in other matters. They have and should have interest, but he alone understands politics rightly who derives all his interest through the work of the Charkha Sangh, making proper use of it under restraint. He will be a truly good voter and vote for the candidate standing on behalf of the Congress, but he will not entangle himself in persuading others to vote for a particular person, nor will he deliver lectures. Congress work is people's work. The Congress represents the people. The Congress has given birth to the A.I.S.A. The A.I.S.A. also belongs to the people. Just as political work is an activity of the Congress so also is the A.I.S.A. an activity of the Congress. But how can one ride two horses? One who joins the A.I.S.A., should devote himself wholly to it and he who enters politics should devote himself to politics. So the two should divide the work between them. Therefore the rule of the A.I.S.A. has been that its workers should not take active part in politics.

(From Hindi)

The Ideology of the Charkha, pp. 108-109; 3-11-'45

50

QUESTIONS

I have two questions about Khadi workers before me. One of these is in connection with village workers. It is their duty to spend their time mainly in spinning and making others spin. The new conception of Khadi work includes all the processes from the cultivation of cotton to the preparation of cloth. A worker who does all these intelligently and can mend the spinning wheel or the spindle, will never have any difficulty in earning his livelihood and teaching others to do so. Along with it, and without letting Khadi work suffer, the worker might treat simple ailments and attend to the sanitation of the village. Education has to be imparted through a craft. Therefore I do not consider it apart from Khadi work. Those who come for education must wear Khadi and get education through Khadi.

The second question is how long should a Khadi worker work as a paid worker. In my view he should be self-supporting from the beginning. If that is not possible, he should fix a time limit for himself. Five years is the utmost limit in my opinion. A worker who is to become self-supporting at the end of five years, should reduce his allowance progressively from year to year. He cannot expect to become self-supporting all of a sudden at the end of five years. It is an art which requires careful thought and management. He who teaches others to be self-supporting should certainly become self-supporting himself.

Harijan, 4-8-'46

51

WHO CAN BE A TRUSTEE?

The task that the A.I.S.A. has undertaken is so vast and great that it calls for a most careful consideration of the qualifications required for a trustee of the A.I.S.A. In my opinion they should be as below:

1. No one should be a trustee merely in name or for the sake of name.

A trustee should have the faith that in a country like India where crores remain unemployed for 4-6 months in the year, everybody can easily be clad in self-spun cloth and need not touch any other if all those who are physically fit spin for a reasonable time everyday, say, on an average an hour per day.

2. A trustee who has this unshakable faith would spin regularly to set a good example to others and for the satisfaction of contributing his or her mite to the service of the country.

3. He or she will try his or her best to attune his or her life with the life in the villages of India.

4. India is made of villages, but our intelligentsia has neglected them. A trustee of the A.I.S.A. would try his or her utmost to remedy the handicaps from which our village life suffers. In doing so he or she should remember that village life must not become a copy or appendage of city life. The cities have to adopt the pattern of village life and subsist for the villages.

5. If a trustee's husband is connected with the mill industry, she should engage a weaver out of her personal money to weave yarn spun by herself or her friends and relatives and use the cloth thus produced.

6. A trustee should read all the literature about hand-spinning and hand-weaving and understand the economic and moral significance of these crafts. He or she should further understand how they can be universalized and explain it to others.

7. A trustee should study and understand the history of the A.I.S.A. from the beginning to date and how it has revolutionized the various processes of cloth manufacture.

These are my ideas. They cannot be obligatory unless the Sangh approves them. I shall welcome all helpful suggestions by way of amendment or addition.

Harijan, 3-11-'46

SECTION TEN: SPINNING FOR SACRIFICE

52

WHY SACRIFICIAL SPINNING?

'Why should I, who have no need to work for food spin?' may be the question asked. Because I am eating what does not belong to me. I am living on the spoliation of my countrymen. Trace the course of every pice that finds its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write.

Young India, 13-10-'21

If I throw the wheel at the skeletons of Orissa, they will not look at it. But if I begin spinning in their midst, they will take to it like fish to water. The masses do as the great ones do, not as they preach. Hence the necessity for the spinning resolution. It gives us a real sense of responsibility towards the villages, it fills the air with the spinning taste and cheapens Khadi. If the spinning resolution is faithfully carried out by the country, it has a potency of which we have as yet no conception.

Young India, 7-8-'24

Now, thank God, we the educated middle class are hungering to identify ourselves with our fallen sisters and our starving brothers. We desire Swaraj so that they may live. We cannot all go to the villages and help the villagers. The fallen sister is a perpetual reminder to us to become pure. How then can we think of and feel for them from day to day? What may we all do for them every day? We are so weak that we want to do as little as possible. What is that little? I can think of nothing else but the spinning wheel. The work must be easy, capable of being done by

all — the learned and the ignorant, the good and the bad, young and old, men and women, boys and girls, the strong and the weak, no matter to what religion they belong. The work to be effective must be the same for all. The spinning wheel satisfies all these conditions. Therefore he or she who spins for half an hour every day serves the masses in the most efficient manner possible. And he renders whole-hearted conscious service to the fallen humanity of India and thus brings Swaraj nearer for that service.

The spinning wheel for us is the foundation for all public corporate life. It is impossible to build any permanent public life without it. It is the one visible link that indissolubly binds us to the lowest in the land and thus gives them a hope. We may or must add many things to it, but let us make sure of it even as a wise mason makes sure of his foundation before he begins to build the superstructure; and the bigger the structure the deeper and stronger the foundation. For the result to be obtained, therefore, spinning should become universal in India.

But spinning will be not only the connecting link between the masses and the classes, it will be the link between the different political parties. It will become common to all the parties. They may disagree on all other things if they like, but they can agree on this at the least.

I ask, therefore, everyone who loves the country, loves the poorest and the fallen, to give half an hour's labour daily to spinning even and well-twisted yarn for their sake and in the name of God. As this must be a gift to the nation, it must be delivered to the All India Khadi Board with religious regularity.

Young India, 4-9-'24

I think of the poor of India every time that I draw a thread on the wheel. For a person suffering from the pangs of hunger, and desiring nothing but to fill his belly, his belly is his God. To him anyone who gives him bread is his master. Through him he may even see God. To give alms to such persons, who are sound in all their limbs, is to debase

oneself and them. What they need is some kind of occupation, and the occupation that will give employment to millions can only be hand-spinning. But I can instil my faith in the potency of hand-spinning in the minds of the toilers of India not by making speeches but only by spinning myself. Therefore I have described my spinning as a penance or sacrament. And, since I believe that where there is pure and active love for the poor there is God also, I see God in every thread that I draw on the spinning wheel.

Young India, 20-5-'26

53

IS SACRIFICIAL SPINNING DESIRABLE?

A friend questions the desirability of spinning, and gravely suggests that, if everybody would spin, the poor people who depend upon spinning for their livelihood would be losers. He forgets that those who are called upon to spin by way of sacrifice promote the Khaddar atmosphere and make it possible to render spinning easier and by small inventions and discoveries make it more profitable. The wages of professional spinners cannot suffer in any way whatsoever by sacrificial spinning.

Young India, 17-6-'26

A correspondent asks:

> "Why do you insist on sacrificial spinning or self-spinning? Sacrificial spinning is spinning to give away. Self-spinning is to convert your own yarn into Khadi for personal use. In either case you take away something from the mouth of the poor spinner, whom you call the lowliest paid worker. In sacrificial spinning you do serve the poor a little by assisting to lower the price of Khadi. In the other it is sheer snatching the bread from a poor spinner's mouth."

This would be partly or wholly true, if spinning had become universal. But today there are some Harijans whose wage-earning capacity has been reduced 50 per cent because they, being weavers, have no hand-spun yarn to weave from. They are now trying to eke out a precarious living anyhow. These weavers would not be reduced to

this sad condition, if there was sacrificial spinning going on in the country on any large scale. I have already stated in these columns how in Orissa representatives of nearly ten thousand weavers, who are almost (because unclassified) Harijans, were starving for want of work, which is the same thing as saying want of hand-spun yarn. It is useless to say that they can weave mill-spun yarn. These ten thousand weavers were doing it. But owing to Japanese competition the demand for hand-woven mill-spun cloth has considerably decreased. It is possible for Khadi weavers to find a local market for their Khadi, not for hand-woven cloth of mill-spun yarn. Time was when there was an abundance of hand-spun yarn because there were hundreds, if not thousands, of sacrificial spinners and there was a dearth of weavers. Now sacrificial spinning has gone out of vogue, and there is practically a plethora of weavers who would gladly weave hand-spun yarn. Therefore, for a long time to come and so long as there is demand for Khadi on the market and until spinning has become so general as to supply the demand, both sacrificial spinning and self-spinning have a definite place in the national economy. It means definite, tangible service of the poor and, among them, specially Harijans.

Moreover, such spinning, seeing that it has to be done by intelligent, educated men and women, becomes allied to art and thus admits of great development. The marvellous improvements that have taken place in the wheel and its accessories, the hand gin and the carding bow, are all due to the interest that the educated middle-class men and women have taken in the movement. All the readers of *Harijan* do not know that the Secretary of the A.I.S.A. is an M.A. and the son of a distinguished and successful banker of Bombay, that its President is one of the ablest businessmen India has produced, that the controller of the Khadi organization in Tamil Nad is an equally distinguished ex-lawyer, that the organizers in Bengal are an able physician and an able chemist, and in U.P. an ex-principal of a national college. These are but a few names,

out of many such I can give, who have dedicated themselves to the service of Daridranarayan through Khadi. But for this band of devotees the substantial progress that it has made would have been impossible and the half crore rupees that have been distributed among, say, two hundred and fifty thousand workers, not as doles but wages for honest labour, during the years that the spinning movement has been going on, would not have been distributed. In no other or better manner could such quick work have been done than through the wheel. It has brought the lowliest in living touch with some of the most cultured men and women in the country, it has brought a ray of light into dark hovels, it has put heart into sinking bodies, it has provided milk for thousands of milkless children, enabled villagers who would care to have automatic famine insurance, reduced idleness and reclaimed thousands from beggar's life.

Therefore it is wrong to say that sacrificial spinning or self-spinning is harmful to the wage-spinners. It is the peremptory duty of all who can to devote at least half an hour daily to spin for the sake of Harijans — the outcastes of India.

Harijan, 19-10-'34

The so-called higher classes have for ages utterly neglected the lower classes, with the result that the latter do not know the art of living. They think that they are mere 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. The so-called upper classes have not escaped the punishment of their misdeeds, for they too do not know the art of living and would perish today if they had no help from the 'lower classes'. The mission of Khadi is to correct this double evil by inviting the 'upper classes' to do penance towards the 'lower classes'.

Harijan, 6-7-'35

54

THE KHADI SPIRIT

The 'Khadi spirit' means that we must know the meaning that the wearing of Khadi carries with it. Every time that we take our Khadi garment early in the morning to wear for going out, we should remember that we are doing so in the name of Daridranarayan and for the sake of the starving millions of India. If we have the 'Khadi spirit' in us, we would surround ourselves with simplicity in every walk of life. The 'Khadi spirit' means illimitable patience. For those who know anything about the production of Khadi know how patiently the spinners and the weavers have to toil at their trade, and even so must we have patience whilst we are spinning 'the thread of Swaraj'. The 'Khadi spirit' means also an equally illimitable faith. Even as the spinner toiling away at the spinning wheel has illimitable faith that the yarn he spins by itself small enough, put in the aggregate, would be enough to clothe every human being in India, so must we have illimitable faith in truth and non-violence ultimately conquering every obstacle in our way.

The 'Khadi spirit' means fellow-feeling with every human being on earth. It means a complete renunciation of everything that is likely to harm our fellow creatures, and if we but cultivate that spirit amongst the millions of our countrymen, what a land this India of ours would be!

But there is one condition behind it, I admit, one condition alone that attaches to the expression of that spirit. It is this that even as Ramanama became in our minds a living force, because it had behind it the unrivalled *tapashcharya* of those who gave it to us, so it is with the Khadi movement. It ought to have the *tapashcharya* of those who are behind it. Every minute of my time I am fully conscious of the fact that, if those who have consecrated their lives to Khadi will not incessantly insist on purity of life, Khadi is bound to stink in the nostrils of our countrymen.

Young India, 22-9-'27

55

SPINNING AS A MEANS OF SELF-REALIZATION

You might ask how it is possible to find God through the spinning wheel. As I have told you before, the spinning wheel enables us to identify ourselves with the crores. The millionaires imagine that money can bring them anything in the world. But it is not so. At any moment death might come and snuff them out. Some are being stabbed daily but losing one's life that way is not the same thing as shedding 'self'. One has to learn to efface self or the ego voluntarily and as a sacrifice in order to find God. The spinning wheel rules out exclusiveness. It stands for all, including the poorest. It, therefore, requires us to be humble and to cast away pride completely.

When self is shed the change will be reflected in our outward behaviour. It will show in the littlest of our little acts. The whole outlook on life will be changed. Everything we do will be undertaken not for little self but for all.

To find God one need not go out anywhere. He resides in our hearts. But if we install self or ego there we dethrone 'poor' God. I have here used the epithet 'poor' advisedly. For, although He is the King of kings, Most High, Almighty, yet He is at the beck and call of anyone who has reduced himself to zero and turns to Him in uttermost humility of spirit. Let us then become poor in spirit and find Him within ourselves.

Harijan, 13-10-'46

THE WHEEL IN THE VEDAS

Pandit Satavalekar of Aundh wrote in 1922 a booklet in Hindi called **वेदमें चरखा** i.e. *Charkha in the Vedas,* and favoured me with a copy whilst I was resting in the Yeravda Jail. Here is what may be called the key *mantra* for spinners and weavers from Rig-Veda X, 53-6 quoted by the author. I give a free rendering as follows :

> " Having spun the thread and given it a shining colour, weave it without knots, and so guard the pathways which the enlightened have chalked out, and thinking well, lead posterity unto the divine light, or (according to the author's rendering) bring forth divine progeny. This truly is the work of poets."

If the translation is at all correct — and the author has not merely given his own rendering but has reproduced Griffith's translation also in his booklet — the *mantra* proves not merely the existence of spinning in the Vedic times, but that it was the calling of the noblest men and women as well as of the humblest. It was one of the pathways which wisdom had prepared and to guard which was the work of poets. Little did I know, when I humbly presented the *charkha* to our Poet as a sacrificial rite, that I had behind me the authority of what is understood to be the oldest Veda. I commend the *mantra* to all those who are engaged in reviving this ancient and sacred industry and art. Let them thoughtfully recite this *mantra* whilst doing their sacrificial spinning. Let them treasure it in their hearts and keep their faith unshaken even in the face of disappointments and reverses in their forward march.

I cannot resist quoting another beautiful *mantra* from the booklet. This is again from the Rig-Veda X, 130-1. It means :

> " Hundred and one artists are working at the sacrifice which through the myriad threads overspreads the earth. Here are the elderly guardians. They watch the processes saying, ' Weave on here, do this right there.' "

Thus we see that spinning and weaving was regarded as a sacrifice in those ancient days and commanded the protecting care of the elders. The author shows by abundant evidence that spinning and weaving were done by men as well as women. In fact the industry was as universal as farming.

Young India, 2-6-'27

57

CHARKHA MANDAL

1. Members of the Charkha Mandal will give six hanks of yarn per year or 320 rounds per month. The condition is that the yarn should be spun on the days fixed by the Mandal and at the place fixed for community spinning. The members will have to make their own slivers by *tunai* and spin them. They will be called Associates.

2. An Associate will pay Re. 1 as admission fee and further give 320 rounds of yarn per month, spun as in clause 1. He will remain an Associate so long as he gives the monthly quota of yarn.

3. The Mandal should make rules as to the time and frequency of community spinning. Anyone who fails to give the quota of yarn for 2 months will be struck off the roll. If he wishes to become a member again, he will have to pay the admission fee a second time. No one will be able to become a member a third time in the same year.

4. Efforts should be made to open such *mandals* in every *mohalla*, village and small town. There may be a central office for each district or province.

5. It is the intention to fix a national day for every month in the whole country, when community spinning should be held at the respective *mandals* at one and the same time.

6. Efforts are being made to start spinning classes along with the *mandals* in various places. At these classes the various processes beginning with hand-ginning with a rolling pin, *tunai*, slivering and ending with spinning will be taught. The admission fee will be one rupee. Those who join the Mandal within a month of learning these processes in the Charkha class will not have to pay an additional rupee for admission to the Mandal. They will only have to give 320 rounds of yarn.

7. Although the yarn spun every month will belong to the Mandal, the spinner in question will be able to buy Khadi with that yarn. The Associates will have the first preference in getting Khadi.

Kanu Gandhi

The Charkha Mandal has evolved out of the three spinning classes held in the Bhangi Colony. How I wish such *mandals* would spring up all over the country ! Before that can happen a number of *mandals* should be opened in Delhi. There are several clubs for play and enjoyment. Why not have many *mandals* for national work ?

Harijan, 27-10-'46

SECTION ELEVEN: SPINNING FOR HIRE

A. SPINNING WAGE

58

NEED FOR A STANDARD WAGE

In trying to commercialize Khadi the Association has been hitherto dominated by the ruling prices. Thus the spinning wage has been the worst of all the wages for any form of labour. They have also varied with provinces. Therefore the prices of Khadi too have varied with the provinces. It is all very well for mere profiteering bodies to countenance and even stimulate cut-throat competition, but associations whose sole purpose is to serve the pauper millions cannot afford to join such competition. There is no reason why a spinner in Bihar should get less than her sister in Gujarat. No doubt prices vary in different provinces because the standard of living varies. But the Association cannot afford to take things as they are. It has to change them if they are unjust. There is no reason why the price of one hour's labour in spinning should be less than one in weaving. There is more skill involved in spinning than in simple weaving. Simple weaving is a purely mechanical process. Simplest spinning requires the cunning of the hand. Yet the spinner gets one pie per hour against the weaver's minimum of six. The carder too does better, almost as well as the weaver. There are historical reasons for this state of things. But they are not just merely because they are historical. Time has come for the Association to equalize, if not also to stabilize, the prices of all labour regulated by it. This, in many cases, will mean inviting the weaver to lower his scale of wages where he gets more than one anna per hour. Time may never come when all the weavers will voluntarily consent to the equalization process. But if the doctrine of equality of wages for all

productive labour is sound, the Association must strive to approach the ideal as near as may be. Unless the whole jump is taken at once, the beginning must be made with raising the wages of spinners to a decent level for a decent hour's work.

My scheme presupposes living contact with the spinner's life. A body that would give an unexpected rise in wages will watch the course of the nickel pieces that may be distributed. It will be useless to raise wages gratuitously, if they are to be wasted in drink or extravagant marriage or other feasts.

Harijan, 6-7-'35

The following questionnaire to its agents and others has been issued by the A.I.V.I.A.*, the answers to reach the central office, Wardha, before 1st August next :

> " It has been proposed that we should insist on the village artisan getting an adequate return for his labour in connection with all articles produced or sold under the aegis of the A.I.V.I.A. For this purpose it will be necessary to fix a working wage standard. Such standard should be the same for either sex for equal quantity of work. It may be based on an eight hour day with a prescribed minimum output. Such wage will enter into the cost, and the price should be fixed in relation to this. Ordinarily we may not be able to fix the prices in the competitive market, but we may do so for articles which do not enter into competition and for goods chosen for their special virtues which are appreciated by the consumers.
>
> This questionnaire is sent out to invite your opinion on the following points :
>
> 1. Do you think it feasible to fix a minimum daily wage and ensure it to the workers by fixing prices ?
> 2. Should we fix our ultimate standard and work up towards it, or should we start with a low minimum and then raise it as we proceed ?
> 3. On what basis should it be arrived at ? Can you suggest a subsistence wage taking into consideration only food for the time being, as clothing should be made by personal effort ? Will half an anna per hour be too low ? "

Associations like the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. and such philanthropic institutions may not follow the commercial maxim of buying in the cheapest market and

* All India Village Industries Association. — Ed.

selling in the dearest. The A.I.S.A. has certainly tried to buy in the cheapest market. Wishing to give the A.I.V.I.A. the benefit of my experience of the evolution of Khadi, I initiated a discussion about the wages received by the artisans working under its influence. The result was the questionnaire.

It has already been discovered that the tendency among agents is to produce the required articles at as low prices as possible. Where may the axe be laid if not upon the artisan's earnings ? Unless, therefore, a minimum rate be fixed, there is every danger of the village artisan suffering, though it is for his sake that the A.I.V.I.A. has been brought into being.

We have exploited the poor patient villagers far too long. Let not the A.I.V.I.A. intensify the exploitation under the guise of philanthropy. Its aim is not to produce village articles as cheap as possible ; it is to provide the workless villagers with work at a living wage.

It has been argued that anything that may raise the price of articles made in the villages will defeat the purpose for which the AI.V.I.A. has been brought into being ; for, it is said, nobody will buy the village articles if the prices are too high. Why should the price of an article be considered too high, if it only provides a living wage for the manufacturer ? The buying public has to be instructed to know the abject conditions of the people. If we are to do justice to the toiling millions, we must render to them their due ; we must pay them a wage that will sustain them ; we must not take advantage of their helplessness and pay a wage that would hardly give them one full meal.

It is quite clear that the Association must refuse to compete with mill manufactures. We may not take part in a game in which we know we must lose. In terms of metal, the big combines, whether foreign or indigenous, will always be able to outbid the effort of the human hand. What the Association seeks to do is to substitute false and non-human economics by true and human. Not killing competition but life-giving co-operation is the law of the human

being. Ignoring the emotion is to forget that man has feeling. Not the good of the few, not even the good of the many, but it is the good of all that we are made to promote if we are 'made in His own image'.

A philanthropic body like the A.I.V.I.A. cannot shirk a consideration of the problems involved in the questionnaire. If the true solution appears to be impracticable, it must be its endeavour to make it practicable. Truth is ever practicable. Thus considered the programme of the Association may fitly be called adult education.

And if the Association is to secure for the artisan under its care a living wage, it must also pry into his domestic budget, and trace the course of every coin that is paid.

The most difficult question to determine would be the minimum or the living wage. I have suggested eight annas for eight hours' strenuous labour converted into a given quantity of the particular goods turned out by an artisan of good ability. Eight annas is a mere token representing a certain quantity of necessaries of life. If in a family of five there are two full workers, they would earn at the proposed rate Rs 30 per month, allowing no holiday and no sickness gap. Thirty rupees per month is no extravagant income for five mouths. The method here proposed necessarily ignores the distinction of sex or age. But every referee will draw upon his own personal experience and report accordingly.

Harijan, 13-7-'35

What is true of the artisans working through the A.I.V.I.A. is equally true of those who are working through the A.I.S.A. Only the A.I.V.I.A. has to write on a clean slate. The A.I.S.A. has to undo a tradition of fifteen years' standing, if it has to introduce a uniform minimum. In helping the numerous spinners it has also to deal with weavers, one-tenth of the number of spinners, besides carders, ginners and others. The wages of each class vary. The difference between those earned by weavers and those

earned by spinners would appear to be too great to admit of equality. Whereas a spinner gets 2 pies per hour, a weaver gets one anna at the lowest and not unoften two. To bring the spinners to twelve pies from two is a very big problem, especially when it is remembered that they number nearly one lakh and half.

But the Association to be worthy of its trust has to develop enough courage to do the right thing. Difficulties are there to be faced, not to cower us. We must trust those who buy Khadi for the love of Daridranarayan to pay a higher price for it than they have done hitherto. If the trust is misplaced, we must face a fall, however big, in sales. Those who love Khadi will buy it at any cost if they know that ninety-five rupees out of one hundred go into the pockets of Daridranarayan.

It is as well to set ourselves right by the spinners by offering them an adequate wage. Is it to be eight annas per day or less? Whatever the limit, what is to be the quantity of yarn expected in one hour to qualify the spinner to receive the given wage? The same question has to be solved for ginners, carders, weavers, and all those who are today working in the manufacture of Khadi.

Harijan, 13-7-'35

Ever since Gandhiji wrote his article on the standard wage for all artisans, especially for the spinners, with whom we are at present dealing on a large scale, the reorganization of Khadi production has been the burning question. Gandhiji has sometimes grudged giving time to the members of the Working Committee coming for advice, but he has never done so with anyone wanting to discuss the question of the hour.

Would not thousands be thrown out of employment, first by the high prices affecting the demand for Khadi, and secondly by enforcing rigid tests on them? In Bihar something like five thousand women walk ten miles a day to receive the present scanty wage. More would come if we could sell more Khadi. What would happen to these

poor women, if the demand for Khadi disappeared? This was one of the chief questions. "Quite right," said Gandhiji, "I know the same is the state of things in Bengal villages and in South India. But I would put your proposition in a converse way. Supposing you gave one pie instead of two pies an hour that you give at present, you would be employing not 5,000 women but 10,000 women. And supposing these helpless women were ready to accept even that miserable pittance, would you dare to do it? I say, you would not. That means that you will have to determine a point beyond which you cannot go. Call it, if you will, a 'helpless minimum'. But if that minimum has to be fixed, why not fix it once and for all, no matter whether it affects some of the producers for the time being adversely? So long as the number of purchasers is limited, and the number of producers unlimited, there is no doubt that you will have to turn some of the producers away. Why not then have a deliberately fixed, high enough minimum wage to ensure these poor women at least a living wage? Otherwise there would be no end to this unconscious exploitation."

"Then," objected a friend, "you will now change the definition of Khadi. It no longer remains hand-spun, hand-woven cloth, but cloth hand-spun, and hand-woven at a particular wage."

"There is no doubt. I am sorry that you are making the discovery so late."

"But spinning is a supplementary occupation, we have been telling the world all these years. It is done only in one's spare hours."

"Yes and no. I know that there are thousands who are doing it for the whole day. To them it is not a supplementary but a substantive occupation. And even if it is not, why not give them for an hour's work what you would usually give for any other hour's work?"

"Do you know that in some parts of Guntur district, people are taking to rice-pounding because it fetches a higher wage than spinning?"

"I do. But you support my argument. They will certainly choose whatever work fetches them a higher wage. Then why not dignify the spinner by a wage which will be equal to any other wage?"

"Practical difficulties are very great. You cannot induce these spinners to conform to your terms. You want a regular register of them, you want them to spin yarn of a particular count of particular evenness and particular strength. How will all that be done?"

"The difficulties have got to be conquered. Do I not know that for a considerable length of time there will be tales of long drawn out agony — some saying we cannot induce the spinners to spin for themselves, some saying we cannot get them to conform to our requirements?"

"But supposing they conform to our regulations, and we give them better machines and better spindles, they will automatically do more work and more than double the wage."

"That they will do automatically but for no virtue of yours. That more production means more earning is obvious enough. But what are we going to do by way of justice which *we* have denied them?"

"No," said Gandhiji, summing up, "we shall have to forget that Khadi has to compete with mill cloth. Mill cloth is mill cloth and Khadi is Khadi. The mill cloth producer will always concentrate on cheapening it, we must concentrate on justice and a fair wage. There can be, therefore, no comparison between the two. As regards the practical difficulties, let us reduce our establishments, let us stop advertisements, let us not patronize the private producer. It is going to be the test of those who are pledged to Khadi. Let them produce it themselves or pay for it enough to give our brothers and sisters a living wage. It is a question of the self-purification of all Khadi-wearers. Let us not forget that our mission is the service of Daridranarayan. Difficulties there may be, but let us solve them gradually."

It seemed to be generally agreed that the experiment must be started wherever possible and with varying but increased wages for spinners.

Harijan, 10-8-'35

59

HOW TO BEGIN

Whether it is to be a standard rate or a minimum for Khadi artisans, a change seems to be a certainty. With the exception of one dissentient, of the many opinions so far received none has opposed my proposal for fixing an increased rate. No one has yet been found to endorse the eight anna proposal. Some of the writers regard the eight anna proposal as fatal to Khadi. The price of Khadi will in that case have to be so far advanced, they say, that there will be very few buyers. Be that as it may, in any change worthy of the name some conditions will have to be fulfilled. It will therefore be wise to take time by the forelock and enforce the following immediately wherever it is at all possible ;

1. The workers should master all the processes from cotton picking to weaving so as to be able to teach others.
2. Organizers should make a register of all the carders, spinners, weavers, etc., within their circle or jurisdiction.
3. They should know the variety of cotton used by their spinners and see that they do not attempt to spin a higher count than it is capable of.
4. Spinners and the other artisans should be warned that, unless they use Khadi in their own households, they may not get any work.
5. The artisans so warned should have facilities put in their way, so as to enable them always to get their Khadi for their labour.
6. Every hank of yarn received should be examined for its strength and evenness, all uneven and weak yarn being rejected even as underbaked bread would be.

7. As a rule each spinner's yarn should be stocked separately and woven when there is enough for a piece. This will ensure durability of Khadi and an all-round improvement in the texture and appearance.

8. All pieces thus prepared should have labels attached to them giving the names of ginners, carders, spinners and weavers where they are all different.

9. Where artisans are members of families, the latter should be induced and encouraged to have all the processes done in their own home. This will be easy when the wages are equalized or nearly so.

10. The lives and budgets of families, coming under the influence of the workers should be carefully studied, and those who spend their earnings judiciously should be helped.

11. If ever it becomes necessary to restrict the number of artisans served by the Association, by reason of shortage of custom, those who have other means of livelihood should be first eliminated. At present, I understand, in several provinces it is not only the neediest who spin but also the thrifty women who want a little money for themselves to buy a few trifles rather than to have better food or to pay debts.

12. In every case the workers will have to closely examine the carding bows and the wheels, especially the latter with reference to the spindles and their revolutions. For the proposed increase will never be a rise pure and simple. It will be partly earned by greater and better output in the same time and partly there will be pure increase. No spinner who refuses to make any improvement in her or his manner of work is likely to get any increase unless the demand for Khadi increases.

13. It follows from the last paragraph that new machines or parts will have to be supplied by the Associations on easy terms in the first instance. In many cases alterations in the *mal* (string) and the spindle will automatically increase and improve the quality of the output.

All these conditions can be fulfilled only if the workers realize that they have a grand mission, and that they are but humble units in a vast family of artisans and labourers who are semi-starved or underfed.

Harijan, 27-7-'35

60

HIGHER PRICES

This is to warn the lovers of Khadi, the votaries of Daridranarayan, that prices of Khadi must go up, greater technical skill must be developed among Khadi workers, a greater spirit of self-sacrifice must be evoked amongst all the classes connected with the production and distribution of Khadi. Sales depots have taken delight in showing a progressive decline in the prices. I remember the time when I sold the first piece of very coarse Khadi for over one rupee per yard. Such coarse Khadi will not fetch two annas today. It is not on sale at Khadi depots. This decrease has been brought about by progressive efficiency in every department of Khadi, but it has been largely purchased at the cost of the spinner. And yet the concrete shape of Daridranarayan is the spinner — the lowest paid labourer in all India. It was good that the A.I.S.A. found a means of employment on the widest scale possible for the chronic unemployed at a wage, be it ever so low, even one pie per hour. But if it is to discharge its trust, it must find at least a subsistence wage for the spinner. Henceforth the report of the A.I.S.A. should state not how much reduction in the price of Khadi has taken place during the period under review, but they should take pride in showing how much increase has been made in spinning wage. It should not be satisfied, I cannot be satisfied, till the spinner's wage per hour has been put on a level with, say, the weaver's. And let the buying public remember that they are the unnamed members of that great trust, and that the spinners are their wards. Once that relation is realized there should be no difficulty in the progressive rise of

Khadi in the geometrical ratio. Would that every lover of Khadi will know his duty and falsify the fears of the unbelievers among Khadi workers who think that the public will never pay a higher price for Khadi ! ! !

Harijan, 10-8-'35

61

PRIVATE PRODUCERS, BEWARE

Whilst the new policy of giving an adequate wage to the spinners and others working at the manufacture of Khadi is taking shape, the question of certified private producers of Khadi comes up for serious consideration. They are responsible for a large quantity of Khadi. The Association has a duty towards these no less than towards the wage-earners. The contracts made with them must be duly fulfilled. But the duty ends there. The whole organization of the Spinners' Association is or should be run as a trust for the spinners whose lot must be progressively improved. Private producers are certified primarily for the benefit of the spinners. They should get their profit through the service of the latter, not at their expense as, we discover, they and others are doing.

But certificates issued to them need not be withdrawn, if they will put themselves on a par with the direct agents of the Association. But they will have to radically revise their method of work, if they will do so. They will have to be satisfied with a reduction of their profits ; they may have even to suffer loss. They have to maintain, in accordance with the requirements of the Association, registers of the spinners and other wage-earners served by them. They have to produce proof of payment of wages, and collect and supply statistics regarding them. This may be too onerous for them. The risk entailed by the probable increase in the price of Khadi may be too great to be borne by them. The requirements of the Association may be too exacting for producers who have undoubtedly to work

hard for making the profits they do. Those who feel so should from now begin to wind up their Khadi business. Those who wish to continue to do Khadi work should put themselves in touch with the agents of the Association. Only they should know that the slightest neglect in the observance of the conditions will entail cancellation of certificates. Loss or no loss, strictest honesty is the essential condition of continuation of their contract with the Association. Only those, therefore, should continue who are lovers of Khadi and devotees of Daridranarayan for whose sake they will not mind losses. Those who are themselves not users of Khadi in their own persons and homes need not entertain any hope of continuing the contract.

Harijan, 7-9-'35

62

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Our objective is, as the name implies, to represent the spinners who are the lowest paid labourers, i.e. to improve their lot. Therefore we have to show a progressive improvement in their lot. You must remember my earliest formula which holds good as much today as it did then — a spinning wheel in every home, and a loom or looms in every village. That is the idea of self-sufficing Khadi, and if I could take you with me, I would have you serve the spinners not so much by selling their Khadi as by making them prepare it for their own use. Not that some of them will not make extra Khadi, but that will depend only on the demand. We shall certainly take orders from the city people who will want our Khadi, and we shall get that Khadi done by those who will get a wage per hour proportionate to their daily need. This may mean a temporary rise in the present price of Khadi. We may no longer exploit the poverty of the people. I have never said it was deliberate exploitation. I take the fullest responsibility for all we have done during the past fifteen years, and what we have done was inevitable. But we have now to strike

a new departure. We have ignored the proletariat for centuries, and whilst we have arrogated to ourselves the right of commanding their labour, the thought has never crossed us that they have a right to dictate their wage, that labour is as much their capital as money is ours. It is time we began to think in terms of their needs, their hours of work and leisure, and their standard of living.

Harijan, 14-9-'35

Shri Gopabandhu Choudhury, writing from Bari-Cuttack, sends the following three questions:

> "1. In self-sufficing Khadi what should be the price of surplus Khadi?
>
> "2. If a villager has cotton but no spinners to give him the requirements of his family and he wants to have his cotton spun for his own family requirements by his co-villagers or neighbouring villagers, what should be the wage? Will the proposed living wage for commercial Khadi be applicable here? Or will it be left to mutual adjustment?
>
> "3. What should be the wage when the spinner has no cotton of her own and she spins not for wages in cash for living but for cotton, and that also till she earns a quantity sufficient for her cloth need?"

The price of surplus Khadi passing through the A.I.S.A. can only be the same as that of any other in the same province. Now that for the most part Khadi sales, except for the requirements of cities, will be confined to provinces where it is manufactured, the prices in different provinces will perhaps vary more than they do now. But there cannot be any distinction between surplus Khadi and any other. Indeed all Khadi can only be surplus Khadi, for Khadi will not be accepted by the Association or its branches from anyone who is not himself or herself a full wearer of Khadi. Of course the rule may have to be relaxed during the transition stage.

On the analogy of the first answer, there is no doubt that so far as the Association is concerned it must pay all spinners alike. But the Association will not regulate the dealings between spinners themselves. They must be allowed to adjust their own mutual relations. Any other policy must fail.

In the third case also the same principle applies as in the first two. The thing to remember is that the Association will be responsible for the payment of the minimum subsistence wage where it is itself concerned. If its policy becomes popular and therefore general, no doubt it will be difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to get things done for less wages. And the co-operation between the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. may become so powerful that wages in every other department will at once be levelled up to their standard. The success of the effort will depend upon the hearty response from the buying public. If they will realize that they may no longer exploit the poor villagers on whom depends their existence, the problem of unemployment and semi-starvation will be automatically solved.

Harijan, 5-10-'35

The Association must not be deterred from doing the just thing by the spinners for fear of the public demand falling. It must, however, if need be, remove from its list of spinners those who do not need the support of spinning for their food. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of spinners who spin for gaining a few pice not for buying food but for buying tobacco, bangles or the like. If there is pressure, these may be told to abstain from competition with those who need coppers for their food. The vast majority of spinners are such. The question, therefore, for workers is to find who are the needy ones in terms of the Association scheme. From the definition will be excluded those petty cultivators who employ labour and who are not ordinarily in want of food and clothing and who are not obliged to sell their holdings or other property to buy food with. But it will strain every nerve to give spinning work or other work accessory to spinning, assuring for every one of the occupations not less than a minimum subsistence wage at the rate of eight hours a day to all those landless and propertyless workers who would starve partially or wholly but for the work found for them by the A.I.S.A. or the A.I.V.I.A. Conversely, these Associations will not concern themselves — not for want of will but for

want of sheer ability — with those who eke out a living in some other way. If these bodies succeed to the full in their mission, they will have not only fulfilled their mission, but they will have indirectly helped all the other needy ones and turned their lives of blank despair into those of bright hope.

Harijan, 5-10-'35

The Board of the Spinners' Association met in solemn conclave to consider Gandhiji's proposal for a new departure in their Khadi policy. As one of the members said this was the solemnest meeting he had attended during the past fifteen years. The proposal for a living wage for all the workers in Khadi production was simple enough, as every one of the members agreed, and the principle at the back of it was unexceptionable. But the working of it seemed, to some of them, to be the most complex procedure. The new departure had already been made in Maharashtra, and some wanted to wait and profit by the experience in this province. Some were afraid that it was not possible to confine the sales to the provinces where Khadi was manufactured, and that we would be confronted with the difficulty of finding a market for Khadi. When the sales were dwindling even under the present conditions, they were bound to disappear under the obviously less favourable conditions. In a province like Andhra where it was possible to get Khadi of fine texture for a particular price today, it would be impossible to sell Khadi of a coarser texture for the same price under the new conditions. The administrative charges would not be lower but proportionately higher with the narrowing of the field of production, for the new policy required better technical skill, more care, and more attention to detail. There was thus an inevitable loss involved in the very working of the new policy. Should this loss also be charged to the consumer, and Khadi made dearer than the higher spinners' wage would render it? Experiments could be made and would be made, but then do not expect the

workers to produce a balanced budget. And so on and so forth.

Gandhiji tried to meet all these objections and doubts and difficulties by further elucidating the principle. "We must," he said, "once for all dismiss the thought of competing with futile, soul-killing economics. Do you know the insidious way in which Japanese fents are glutting the market ? Whereas less than five years ago they were a few thousand yards, they amount to millions of yards today. How can you compete with these ? No, we must no longer aim at reducing the prices in order to meet this competition. We have all these years thought of the consumer and done precious little for the spinner, forgetting that the Association was a spinners' association, not an association for consumers. We have to be true representatives of the spinners, which we have ceased to be. The result is that we have simply jogged on and relied on the political upheavals and indulged in a kind of gamble. 'What is the use of all the fancy advertisements that you have been giving ?' I asked Jerajani. 'We shall soon end in justifying the charge that we are maintaining the institution in order to provide work for the middle class unemployed.' It is therefore that I suggest that we should no more incur losses in order to exploit the neediest of our fellowmen. 'In order to give a hundred women a satisfactory wage, you will run the risk of depriving thousands of them of employment,' is the question that was put to me. I say it is a crisis that it is necessary to produce in order to get rid of a remittent fever. I ask you to forget the cities and the consumers in the cities. Concentrate in making the thirty crores of our villagers produce and use their own Khadi, and the one crore or so of the city-dwellers will automatically begin wearing Khadi. Do not mind a temporary lull or a breakdown. If there is no demand, do not produce the supply. Where your *bhandars* are run at a loss close them down, and tell all those who care to have your Khadi that you are prepared to get it made for them but only at the revised rates.

"But I do not want to thrust my proposal on you. You may reject it, if it fails to carry conviction. Do not assume on your shoulders heavier responsibility than they can bear. Cut your coat according to your cloth. Let me tell you that in the production centre at Savli there are already spinners who are satisfying the conditions of the new wage and have begun to earn from three to four annas daily. Concentrate on self-sufficing Khadi wherever it is possible, and a healthy Khadi atmosphere will grow out of it. In Kathiawad, for instance, for a time they made desperate attempts to run several centres and to stimulate the sale of Khadi thus produced. They have given it up now, and among the replies that Shri Shankarlal Banker has received is one from the Secretary of the Kathiawad Branch to the effect that he has no criticism to offer and no opinion to express on the new policy, inasmuch as all the production in that centre consists of self-sufficient Khadi."

The result of the discussion was a resolution (given below) which was unanimously adopted:

This Council is of opinion that the wages now paid for spinning are inadequate, and therefore resolves that they be raised and a suitable standard be fixed so that spinners may at least receive a minimum wage calculated on the basis of eight hours' efficient work, sufficient at least to procure clothing (20 yards per year) and maintenance in accordance with a scientifically prescribed scale of minimum food requirements. All concerned should try, as circumstances permit, for a progressive rise in the wages scale, so as to reach a standard enabling each spinning family to be properly maintained out of the earnings of its working members.

In order to guide the A.I.S.A. workers in the execution of the principle underlying the foregoing proposition, the following should be regarded by all branches and bodies working in affiliation to or in any other way, under the Association, as the settled policy of the Association until

it is altered in the light of further experience by the Council.

1. The mission of the Association is to make every home in India self-sufficing through Khadi with reference to its clothing requirements, and to promote the welfare of spinners, who are the least paid among Khadi artisans, and all others engaged in the different cotton processes beginning with growing cotton and ending with the weaving of Khadi.

2. It is therefore imperative that those who work for the production of Khadi, whether as artisans, sellers or otherwise, shall use Khadi for their clothing requirements to the exclusion of every other kind of cloth.

3. All the branches and affiliated bodies shall so work the scheme as to avoid all losses, that is, so as to restrict their production to the demand within their own selected areas commencing with their immediate neighbourhood and never extending beyond their province except in so far as they are called upon by other provinces to meet the latter's demand.

4. In order to avoid surplus production, producers may restrict their operations only to those spinners who solely depend upon spinning for their daily bread for part of the year or the whole of it. Branches and other bodies shall maintain an accurate register of all the spinners and other artisans employed by them and shall deal directly with them. In order to ensure the use of the wages for clothing and food, a part or the whole of them may be paid in kind, i.e. Khadi or other necessaries of life.

5. In order to avoid overlapping, undue competition, or duplicating of expenses, where there are more Khadi-producing organizations than one, the area of operation of each shall be previously defined. Private certified producers will not be encouraged by the Association. Among those that are already certified, those only who will work strictly under the same rules that govern the Association branches and take all risks without any prospect of recouping themselves from the Association will have their certificates

renewed on the strict understanding that any breach of the rules that may be laid down from time to time or instructions given will involve automatic withdrawal of their certificates.

6. It should be understood that it is the primary and imperative duty of all organizations working under the Association to promote the scheme of self-sufficing Khadi. Production of Khadi for meeting the demand of cities or of Khadi-wearers outside cities who do not spin for themselves is a secondary or supplementary duty. No organization will be considered bound to produce or sell such Khadi.

Harijan, 19-10-'35

When the scheme of increased wages for spinners was inaugurated many workers had grave doubts about its success. They had thought that the consequent rise in the price of Khadi would adversely affect the sales. Experience has dispelled the fears, and the Council is anxious to take a further step forward, if it can at all be taken, at an early date. Whilst, therefore, there need be no haste about taking the further step, workers may not be lazy about it either. They should know that the goal is eight annas per day of eight hours. We have only nominally reached three annas which are evenly distributed between increase and efficiency. The efficiency earnings do not directly affect the sale price. If anything, the efficiency of spinners improves the quality of Khadi. The direct increase in the wages undoubtedly raises the prices, but its burden is broken by the improvement in quality. Then the increase is so judiciously regulated as to affect the poorest buyer not at all or very slightly. I have no manner of doubt that, if only the workers will themselves be more efficient, more vigilant and more faithful, they will hasten the day when spinners can easily earn eight annas per day of eight hours' work without involving a phenomenal rise in the sale price. More scientific knowledge must improve the capacity of hand gins, carding bows and spinning wheels. Great observation

of spinners' work must result in their being more skilled and more efficient. Greater grasp of administrative detail and greater faithfulness must mean a substantial decrease in overhead charges. In other words, our ignorance of the science of Khadi is at the bottom of our present inability to reach the goal of eight annas per day. The resolution is intended as a spur to effort. God helps only the ever-watchful.

Harijan, 17-4-'37

I was goading the Sangh to rise to eight annas wages for an eight hour day for the spinners. I knew that the goal was not to be reached in one jump. I had, however, nursed the hope that every few months would show a progressive increase in the wages. But reports from the different branches and the partial failure of the experiment carried on under my nose by Shri Jajuji under the guidance of Shri Vinoba with high hopes of going forward with the rise, have opened my eyes to the stern and grim reality that this country is so terribly poor that it cannot afford to pay a wage of eight annas per day of eight hours to millions of women. Generally nowhere in rural areas do village labourers or artisans earn eight annas for eight hours' work. Spinners could not earn eight annas without all the other classes doing likewise. And the purchasing classes simply have not the money to pay an all-round wage of eight annas per day unless conditions are radically altered. The crushing and unproductive military burden drains the country dry. Add to this the inordinately high salaries and correspondingly high pensions paid, and spent abroad. There are other internal causes also for this gnawing poverty. But I must not stray from the purpose of this article.

Be the cause or causes what they may, the painful fact has been brought home by Khadi workers that in spite of all the will in the world the middle class Khadi buyer simply has not the money to buy Khadi at the increased price necessitated by the rise in wages beyond

the point of three annas. They report that for the time being at any rate that is the saturation point.

Harijan, 26-8-'39

Q. You once wrote in *Harijan* to the effect that villagers are at liberty to buy yarn spun in their own villages without reference to the living wage, and that the A.I.S.A. should let them go their way in this matter. Are those who wear Khadi woven from such yarn eligible as Congress delegates? And what is the village worker to do in this regard? He naturally does propaganda in favour of a living wage. There are always a certain number of villagers who buy A.I.S.A. Khadi, but at the same time there are many who cannot afford to do so. And even if they pay less than the living wage, there is no doubt that the spinners get more relief and Khadi finds a certain place in village life too. Is the village worker then to encourage such Khadi?

A. If we were always careful enough not to read into a writer's sentences a meaning which defeats his very purpose, such questions would rarely arise. Where no wages are paid and the yarn is self-spun, no ban of any kind can be applied. It is of course assumed that the A.I.S.A. rule is not broken on a false plea of self-sufficiency. The same applies to the village worker.

But there is one important issue raised in your questions. The A.I.S.A. worker in a particular village cannot pay a living wage if he is to use the village Khadi. Therefore he will buy yarn at a lesser rate and give some work to the spinners who would otherwise get nothing. But he may not become a member of the Congress. He will serve the Congress from without. Sometimes such persons serve the Congress far better, and they are moreover saved from the ambitions that membership often carries with it. It is clear that such Khadi cannot be sold outside the village. It should all be absorbed locally. The moment uncertified Khadi is put into the market the A.I.S.A. law is broken and real Khadi receives a set-back. The A.I.S.A. is labouring under great stress in trying to raise the spinners' wages.

Never in the world have I heard of wages being increased from one or two pice to 8 or 12 pice per day without the wage-earners having asked for a rise in pay. The A.I.S.A. has done monumental work in this matter.

Harijan, 1-9-'40

B. UNCERTIFIED KHADI

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UNCERTIFIED *v.* CERTIFIED

The difficulty that cropped up in Tamil Nad on the introduction of the new scale of wages for spinning has arisen in other places and specially in Andhra, as appears from several letters I have received from that part of India. Correspondents complain bitterly of the harm uncertified dealers of Khadi are doing to the cause of the poor women who have no chance of earning an additional pice. I do not know whether the uncertified dealers will listen to my exhortation not to be so selfish as to snatch the pices from thousands of poor spinners. I hope they will. But the real remedy lies in the hands of the Khadi-buying public. If they will not buy Khadi except from the *bhandars* certified by the A.I.S.A., the uncertified *bhandars* will have to close down. The public should know that the Association rates alone make it possible to pay higher wages to spinners.

Harijan, 29-8-'36

Unfortunately Congressmen, out of ignorance or because they do not believe in Khadi, buy cheap cloth for make-believe at the uncertified stores, and thus thwart the Congress policy about Khadi and, to the extent of their purchase, defraud the spinners of the rise in the wages. Let the public realize that every rise in the price of Khadi means at least that much more paid to the spinner. I use 'at least' advisedly. For the whole of the rise in wages is not charged to the buyers.

Those Congress leaders who open Khadi stores without reference to the A.I.S.A. or without being asked by it, certainly harm their own institution, encourage fraud,

and violate the Congress policy ; whereas it should be the duty and pride of every Congressman to help in every way the effort of the A.I.S.A. to better the lot of the most helpless of humanity.

Harijan, 15-10-'38

When the increase in the spinners' wages was decided upon by the A.I.S.A. the Maharashtra Branch was the foremost in giving enthusiastic support to the proposal. It has the direct guidance of Shri Vinoba. It has worked out the increase programme with a precision not approached by the other provinces. The result is that the other provinces not having increased the wages to the same extent as the Maharashtra Branch are able to undersell the latter's Khadi, and do not hesitate to send their stock to the areas covered by the Maharashtra Branch. Unscrupulous merchants are not slow to take advantage of the situation. Thus uncertified stores have sprung up in Nagpur, Wardha and elsewhere. The unwary public, not knowing the new arrangements and eager to buy cheap Khadi, prefer to patronize the uncertified stores, thus doing great damage to the Maharashtra Branch stores. The result is that the Maharashtra Branch has either to reduce wages or to close down its business. This would amount to Khadi killing Khadi. Khadi lovers should know that the economics of Khadi are different from and often contrary to the ordinary economics of the competitive system which is not governed by the principle of the greatest good of all, i.e. of the least among the downtrodden. Thus I have endeavoured to show in these columns that, if Khadi is to fulfil its mission —

1. There must be progressive increase in the rise of the wages of the spinners till the minimum of one anna per hour is reached.

2. The ideal is that each village should produce and use its own Khadi. From this it is clear that the least that should be done at present is that each province should produce enough and no more for its own requirements, permission being given for the sale outside its limits of

such Khadi as can only be produced by that province. For instance, Andhra can export, say, 80 counts Khadi outside its limits, but not coarse Khadi no matter how cheap it is.

3. No profits can be made for the sake of profits. The wage-earners are the shareholders and the proprietors in this the greatest co-operative organization in the world. If, therefore, there happen to be profits made in any single year, the proper use to make of them is to devote them to increase the number of spinners so long as there are any to be provided for, otherwise to increase the wages of the existing spinners.

4. Any province that makes an attempt to increase the wages of spinners to the desired level should be encouraged by the other branches and Khadi-lovers.

5. The general public should restrict their use of Khadi to the Khadi produced in their own provinces although it is dearer than in other provinces. They must trust the A.I.S.A. to do its best for every province.

6. The policy of the A.I.S.A. no doubt should be to reach uniformity of wages and prices throughout India. But till that ideal condition is reached the public should have humanitarianism enough to know that they have a duty by the wage-earners of their own province. It is almost as bad to have inter-provincial competition as it is to have competition with the outside world.

The immediate thing to be wished for is that all uncertified stores should be closed. Congressmen and others should warn the public against buying from such stores, and provincial branches should resolutely refuse to sell their stock outside except at the instance of the provincial A.I.S.A. agencies concerned.

Harijan, 24-6-'39

To those who have no faith Khadi is tottering. In reality it is gaining ground. From being the poor man's staff of life, it is trying to become the non-violent means of gaining independence. The difficulty is fairly clearly

expressed in the following paragraphs from a letter from Tamil Nad :

"The A.I.S.A. is faced with two problems now. The one is to keep on the Khadi production on the present methods. The other is to give reorientation to our activity related to artisans and their villages where we serve.

"The commercial production as it is, is seriously affected in the last few months owing to competition of the uncertified merchants in Khadi. The uncertified merchants buy the yarn from our spinners who spin with better cotton supplied by us. They buy Khadi woven by the weavers out of our yarn and sell it with profit. They go to our weavers' homes and buy the Khadi woven for us by giving extra wages and yarn equivalent for the Khadi. The weavers part with our Khadi as they get extra wages and yarn at their own homes. The Khadi thus bought is sold as special Khadi with higher prices.

"There are more than fifty uncertified Khadi dealers in this area, who are said to produce about Rs. 7 lakhs worth of uncertified Khadi monthly. Among these are Congressmen also, who occupy places in the Congress Executive.

"We are not able to influence the artisans against being exploited by the uncertified merchants though the former have their deposits with us. They simply say that they are not able to resist the temptation of higher wages for inferior labour and with no conditions that we impose with regard to quality and their wearing Khadi, etc. The spinners are given besides an inferior cotton called *bonda* by the uncertified dealers which require no carding. This is mill waste available for about three-fourths the price of good cotton. The yarn spun is only in sheafs without hanking. As this is simpler the spinners prefer this cotton. Because higher wages are paid for indifferent labour and no deposits are taken for Khadi from spinners and as there is no insistence upon quality of yarn etc. there is a tendency on the part of the spinners to work under the uncertified merchants.

"This tendency among the artisans is a great impediment and obstacle in approaching them with our ideals of village reconstruction through the *charkha*."

The present method of Khadi production has to be sacrificed if it hinders reorientation. This requires faith and the alertness which faith brings. Faith never accrues to the lazy.

Uncertified Khadi dealers are a powerful menace to Khadi whether from the standpoint of the poor man or of

non-violence. For, the dealer knows only his own pocket and nothing else matters to him. Of course, he goes to the weaver and the spinner and makes all kinds of promises, not knowing that if he killed the A.I.S.A. he would kill himself.

The pity of it all is that Congressmen become willing tools in the hands of these uncertified dealers. They have brought into being an association of specialists. Yet they do not know that they are willingly or unwillingly killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Moreover, Khadi furnishes the acid test of public honesty. It is a great effort to find the best way of inducing honesty in public dealings, for it means coming in close and selfless touch with the millions of men and women in the villages.

The upshot of it all is that workers like the writer have to carry on their work with full faith in their mission and leave the result in the hands of God.

Harijan, 12-5-'46

A Gujarati friend asks :

> "Ever so many national organizations insist that not only should their staff be dressed in Khadi, but that even books should be Khadi-bound. Since certified Khadi can only be had from the recognized *bhandars* on payment of a certain quota of yarn, they naturally resort to uncertified Khadi. Is this right ? Is not mill cloth preferable to uncertified Khadi ? Is not insistence on Khadi that results in buying it from uncertified shops really a false pretence ?"

When among other things, there is a dearth of Khadi, it is improper to insist on its use for purposes of book-binding etc. When there was an abundance of Khadi, it was I who recommended its use for all such purposes. The entire Congress Camp in Ahmedabad in 1921, was bedecked in Khadi. Today it would be madness to attempt such a thing. Time and circumstances alter methods.

But I do not understand the writer's plea for mill cloth as opposed to uncertified Khadi. What is uncertified Khadi ? Is it not hand-spun and hand-woven cloth though uncertified ? That there may be fraud about it, is another

matter. The Charkha Sangh cannot guarantee cent per cent purity in even certified Khadi. Nothing in this world is proof against deceit, has been true throughout the ages. Drawbacks in uncertified Khadi are well known. In it there is no fixity of wages to the spinners and the weavers. Those who sell it, make what profits they like. Often do persons set up shops, merely to spite the Charkha Sangh *bhandars*. Nevertheless, where there is no fraud, all cloth which is hand-spun and hand-woven must be called Khadi. What a person spins and has woven into cloth for himself, is not certified in the legal sense and yet it is Khadi in the highest and purest sense of the term. It would be a crime on that person's part, to use mill cloth instead of the cloth made from the labour of his own hands.

The upshot is that exclusion of mill cloth must be maintained. Uncertified Khadi should be avoided as far as possible, but where certified Khadi is not available and the choice lies between mill cloth and uncertified home-spun, preference should be given to the latter, assuming of course that it is pure Khadi. You may condemn, if you like, as uncertified, cloth made out of the labour of one's own hands; but the fact remains that it is a purer production than certified Khadi. And, if all span enough to have cloth woven for their requirements, what need would there then be for the Charkha Sangh? Heaven and earth would then ring with cries of victory to the Charkha Sangh.

Harijan, 22-9-'46

"You have taught us to be straight and above-board in everything," asked another member. "Is it not dishonest to wear uncertified Khadi and be known as a Khadiwala when one does not fulfil the conditions of wearing Khadi? Is it not better to be honest and use mill cloth instead?"

Gandhiji replied that he did not approve of uncertified Khadi, but he was of opinion that Khadi, so long as it was genuine stuff, was preferable to mill cloth. All uncertified Khadi was not dishonest. For instance, people who spin for themselves or their family and have their yarn woven do not use certified Khadi. Yet such Khadi is of the

highest merit. Certified Khadi carries the guarantee that the rules of the A.I.S.A. have been observed, as for instance, paying to the spinners a certain minimum wage. Khadi, even when spinners were not paid the standard A.I.S.A. wage, was preferable to mill cloth. The higher wages paid to labourers in the spinning mills were more apparent than real. Mill cloth was 2½ times cheaper than Khadi today. Experts had told him that if the mill industry did not receive special privileges and concessions in several ways, which it today enjoyed, mill cloth would not sell cheaper than Khadi. For instance, we provide cheap transport facilities to the mills to enable raw materials and mass-produced finished goods to be taken from one place to another. Again, enormous sums have been spent on growing long-staple cotton or on starting technical institutes and on research work. No one had bothered to do anything for any of the seven lakhs of India's villages. So the mills were today actually being subsidized in some shape or other. "Remove all that and then see whether mill cloth is cheaper than Khadi."

He could not possibly encourage uncertified Khadi, continued Gandhiji, but mill cloth should be absolutely taboo. "A day might come when the A.I.S.A. might stop issuing certificates. Anybody would then be free to sell Khadi. That would be inevitable when Khadi becomes universal. The Charkha Sangh will then function as the custodian of the ethics and the general policy of Khadi. Its business activities will cease. People must become honest by habit and insist upon meticulous honesty on the part of the producers of and dealers in Khadi so that only genuine stuff is sold and bought."

Harijan, 20-10-'46

The same friend, who suggests that Khadi can remove cloth shortage, writes that India having attained independence, there is little difference now between certified and uncertified Khadi, mill-cloth and foreign cloth. Khadi may have significance for him who spins and weaves to clothe himself, but people are unable to do so or even to spin

the minimum quota of yarn prescribed for the purchase of Khadi from the *bhandars*. No improvement is noticeable in the quality of pure Khadi, while many useful varieties of uncertified Khadi are available. Moreover, it is difficult nowadays to give what can be termed a living wage in the Khadi industry. On these grounds the writer observes that the purchase of uncertified Khadi should be permitted. He proceeds to argue that having regard to the acute shortage of cloth all over the country and to the fact that the Union Government itself imports foreign cloth, there should be no objection to the purchase of such cloth either.

That such questions can be raised shows the change in the times. My answer is that only "certified Khadi" should be used. Let me indicate the meaning of this term. Even the Charkha Sangh's definition is incomplete. The term really implies that a reasonable wage is given to spinners and weavers and the price of Khadi fixed with an eye on public good and not with a profit motive. Certification of such Khadi by the Charkha Sangh becomes necessary as people have, as a rule, to fall back upon the purchase of Khadi in addition to self-made (स्वावलंबी) Khadi. Any other Khadi is uncertified and open to objection and should not, therefore, be used. It is open to the public to suggest improvements in the conditions presented for the certification of Khadi, but it would be definitely wrong to abolish the distinction between certified and uncertified Khadi.

Again, how can one shut one's eyes to the distinction between Khadi, mill-cloth and foreign cloth, or justify the import of foreign cloth because foreign rule has ended? We must remember that we opposed foreign rule because it involved the economic ruin of the country. The first fruit of freedom should, therefore, be to put an end to this curse.

In fine it follows that pure Khadi alone has place in Swaraj. In it lies the wellbeing of the people as well as true equality.

Harijan, 11-1-'48

C. KHADI BHANDARS *

64

KHADI STORES

No Khadi store should be run at a loss. A.I.S.A. stores should aim primarily at quality, never at mere show, masquerading under the name of art. Who knows what true art is ? At best it is a relative term. A.I.S.A. stores should be original, should introduce village art in towns, and have confidence that they will win the day. Every piece of Khadi must be strong and durable. We must not procure fineness at the cost of durability. Flimsiness will kill Khadi in the end. If we cannot produce fine counts without sacrificing strength, we must own our inability. I have noticed, often enough to frighten me out of bleaching, that bleached Khadi gives way almost at the first wear. It is not suggested that this is true in every case. It is enough for my purpose to be able to say that cases of bleached Khadi having proved undurable have been frequent enough to cut out customers. Let all Khadi Bhandars, therefore, revise their standard in so far as it may be necessary in the light of what I have said here.

Harijan, 29-3-'35

* For further writings on Khadi Bhandars, see Section XIII, chap. 75 and Section XIV, chapters 82-84.

SECTION TWELVE: SPINNING FOR SELF

65

SELF-SUSTAINED KHADI

Self-sustained Khadi means Khadi spun and woven in the first instance by the villagers for themselves and, wherever possible, out of cotton grown, ginned and carded in the respective villages. This is the true mission of Khadi. The end can only be achieved by persistent human contact with the villagers. They should know the dignity and value of work apart even from its economic value. Khadi under this scheme will be manufactured to suit the village taste. Bleaching, even washing, will be avoided, for every villager will wash for himself or herself. Khadi thus produced will be cheaper than any cloth, if its durability is taken into account. The town Khadi carries all the incidental charges, e.g. extra processes, stocking, transport, rents, commissions. The village Khadi eliminates all these charges. The towns and cities should rely for their supplies on the surplus that may be saved after village use.

Harijan, 29-3-'35

When emphasis is put on self-sufficient Khadi, commercial production will be restricted to the real wants of townspeople. It will then pass into the hands of private businessmen instead of being centralized in the hands of the Association.

Harijan, 6-7-'35

Self-sufficing Khadi has to receive the first place in all Khadi organizations. In a way self-sufficing Khadi and production for sale will go together. Production for sale will be a by-product of self-sufficing Khadi, and the latter will ensure the success of the former. As the condition of

production is that the workers must be Khadi-clad, they will have to make or take Khadi for themselves. This they can easily do out of the (for them) very big rise in their wages which they will be receiving without having expected or demanded it. But receipt of wages will depend upon the surplus production which to be of use must command a ready sale. Thus self-sufficing methods will be easy where there are producing centres. For the spinners and other artisans will be more open to conviction than the others with whom workers have never come in touch.

But some ask, "Who will buy Khadi at higher prices?" In my opinion this betrays ignorance and want of faith and resourcefulness.

Hitherto we have confined our attention to stimulating demand in the cities; we have been urban-minded. We have never cared to study the localities immediately surrounding centres of production; we have neglected the very producers themselves. Now, before we even tested the latter, we seem to have confidence that they will respond. Why should we not have the same confidence about the people in the surrounding localities? Surely they need cloth for their daily use. Is it too much to expect them to take in some Khadi manufactured by their next-door neighbours? I know that those who have made an earnest effort in that direction have never failed. Failure has been with us, not with the prospective buyers. They are always with us, it does not matter what they buy and use today. If we would study the wants of the surrounding localities, we would produce Khadi that would suit their taste and arrest their attention. Khadi workers have done that before now with success for the sake of the city-dwellers. Will they now turn their attention towards rural areas? It is not so much the dearness of Khadi that turns people away from it. It is our want of faith and resourcefulness. If we have faith, we shall find that the same millions are open to us as they are to the vendors of fents that come to us from the Far East.

It is not without full justification that the Council of the A.I.S.A. has insisted upon every Khadi organization being self-supporting and hence autonomous. They may no longer rely on the Centre to spoon-feed them. The Central Fund should be freed for tapping areas we have hitherto neglected.

Harijan, 26-10-'35

The science of Khadi requires decentralization of production and consumption. Consumption should take place as nearly as possible where Khadi is produced. All effort should be directed towards that end. We may produce for the demands of the cities, but should never depend upon them as we would on the local market. We must first study the local market and supply its wants. And since all Khadi artisans and, wherever possible, all artisans working under the aegis of the A.I.S.A. or the A.I.V.I.A. will be expected to use Khadi, a minimum demand will thus always be assured. Satish Babu and Shri Jethalal of Anantpur have made independent calculations, and have concluded that self-sufficing Khadi will mean 2 yards of sale outside against 3 yards of wear by the artisans. If the calculation is correct, self-sufficing Khadi to be popular will need considerable support from local markets. Since other industries will go hand in hand with Khadi, it may be that self-sufficing Khadi will receive help through village industries other than Khadi. The test of self-sufficing Khadi lies in the fact that it will cost the wearer practically nothing but his labour. Self-sufficing Khadi will never spread unless local markets are created all over the country and demand stabilized. In order to ensure stabilization it is necessary to define areas for every producing centre so as to avoid overlapping and unhealthy competition among workers attached to the same organization.

Harijan, 2-11-'35

Shri Gopabandhu Chaudhary writes:

"You refer to a calculation that 'self-sufficing Khadi will mean 2 yards of sale outside against 3 yards of wear by artisans'

etc. Apparently this calculation is based on the fact that for the price of cotton and weaving charges the self-sufficing spinner will have to spin a little extra. Of course you admit that the spinner can also rely on other village industries for the income to enable her to purchase the cotton or pay the weaver. But the reading of the article leaves an impression that the success of self-sufficing Khadi entirely depends upon the sale of Khadi. But is this a correct ideal ? Is not the ideal of self-sufficing Khadi this that in a majority of cases the spinners will spin their own cotton or purchase their cotton and pay the weaver from their earnings from other village industries or agricultural labour ?

Otherwise, when our aim is to make every home in the village self-sufficient, where will the extra two yards for outside produced by the spinners sell ? Will the demand of the cities be possibly so large ?

It seems that by tacking self-sufficient Khadi on to the sale of commercial Khadi we make the case for the former weak and give it practically a secondary place in the minds of Khadi workers which you want to revolutionize. Self-sufficing Khadi ought to thrive independently on its own merits, as there is enough unutilized land to grow the cotton required and unemployed leisure to spin the yarn."

The ideal no doubt is for every family to grow, spin, weave and wear its own cotton, just as it is for every family to own land and grow its own corn, cook and eat it.

But we know that every family won't and can't realize the ideal ; we know too that success will not attend the worker immediately he begins to preach the unadulterated message of self-sufficing Khadi. What Gopabandhu Babu has himself suggested is itself an intermediary stage, that of a householder buying enough cotton, spinning it himself, having the yarn woven, and paying the charges from his savings. But there are millions who have no savings, and there are millions who purchase their cloth without performing any of the processes. To spin for oneself and pay for cotton and weaving out of the proceeds of some other industry is an intermediate stage. To spin extra and from the proceeds of that labour to pay for weaving is yet another intermediate stage, and perhaps the easiest both from the worker's and the weaver's point of view. In working out this stage we have ready-made Khadi centres. There the workers have to induce spinners and other

artisans to wear Khadi, if they are to continue to get work through the A.I.S.A. agency. There are many among them who depend for their maintenance entirely on their labour spent on spinning, weaving, carding or dyeing. These can only wear Khadi, if they work at producing surplus Khadi and command the sale of such products. This ought not to be difficult, if in spite of the rise in the spinner's wage the existing demand for Khadi continues.

In practice all the stages will be worked simultaneously. What the new scheme does is to put the emphasis on the right spot and state what the goal is in unmistakable terms. Khadi workers will no longer concentrate on increasing sales and reducing the price of Khadi. They are henceforth to concentrate on people becoming self-sufficing about their cloth requirements at least to the extent of spinning. They will have to establish personal touch with the artisans, befriend them, know their wants, and help them progressively to improve their economic condition by making the best possible use of their leisure hours consistently with equal opportunity for all. This ought to be a good enough programme for the most ambitious worker. The most difficult task will be on the one hand to open the eyes of understanding of the millions and persuade them to use their leisure hours for their own betterment, and on the other to persuade the buying class — the city people and the middlemen — to realize that in the long run it pays them if they buy village manufactures, even though their cost may be apparently somewhat higher than they have hitherto paid and even though the appearance be not quite what they have been used to. It pays them because it raises the material condition of the people and therefore their purchasing power. The new scheme is, therefore, calculated to draw the best out of the whole of the nation irrespective of 'caste, colour or creed'. The question ultimately resolves itself into this: Have we for this task workers enough of the requisite purity, self-sacrifice, industry and intelligence?

Harijan, 30-11-'35

66

KHADI FOR VILLAGES

Let the Khadi workers realize that the mission of Khadi is not to be confined to the cities, it has to spread among the millions of villagers who are waiting to hear the call. It is the surplus Khadi that is to find its way to cities. The vast quantity has to be made and used by the villagers themselves. The true way to reach the villagers is to concentrate on them in their own cottages. City sales, therefore, can be no index of the progress of the mission of Khadi. Khadi statistics of the future have to show the progress made from year to year in the villages. If a large number of workers are to be freed for the spread of Khadi in the villages, we must reduce our labours in the cities.

Harijan, 7-12-'35

I would suggest to the workers that now that the true message of Khadi has been understood they should take all the steps simultaneously. A commencement has to be made with cotton growing with a fair knowledge of the conditions of cotton cultivation. It should be possible to grow cotton for village use almost anywhere. Concentration in the most favourable soil is necessary when the ambition is to supply the world. But the reverse holds good where the ambition is to supply the village need. A corner in a field can easily grow enough cotton for the village farmer ; or a village may grow cotton for itself in co-operation. If this is done, it is simple enough to see that no imported cloth can beat cloth thus produced locally, either in cost or durability. The process induces the greatest conservation of energy.

Harijan, 20-4-'35

Self-sufficient Khadi will never succeed without cotton being grown by spinners themselves or practically in every village. It means decentralization of cotton cultivation so far at least as self-sufficient Khadi is concerned.

For this we shall need a census of the villages served. For not every spinner or weaver has a plot (ever so tiny) of land, where he or she can grow cotton. Self-sufficient Khadi is a proposition for which alone can the existence of the A.I.S.A. be justified. It is a field as yet untouched by it on any scale worth mentioning.

Harijan, 27-7-'35

Where an article is produced for personal use the greater the concentration of all the processes in the same family or even the same hands, the greater the economy of time and money. A person, who has a little land which he can call his own even for a fair period and works on it daily, can have his Khadi for mere labour put in by him or his during their odd moments. All he needs is instruction or education to show how each one can make his own Khadi practically for nothing. When labour has to be paid for and that at an equal rate per period, spinning would take in the largest part of the outlay. For spinning yarn for one yard of Khadi takes longer than any of the other processes anterior or posterior to it will take. If a person gins, cards and spins for himself, which he can do easily, he will get his Khadi almost at the same price as mill cloth. The cost of an article represents the cost of labour spent in its production. So when the whole labour comes from the user himself the cost is practically nothing, when that labour is given during leisure hours. Self-sufficient Khadi eliminates the middleman altogether. It is the easiest method of perceptibly increasing the income of the millions of the semi-starved villages.

But will the villager ever take to self-sufficient Khadi? Yes, if we have faith accompanied by technical skill, or rather a living faith that will move mountains, and give the worker all the skill necessary for his task which is undoubtedly difficult. But whether difficult or easy it has hardly been attempted as yet on any large or organized scale or a well-conceived plan. Not without a well-conceived, India-wide effort to educate the villagers to produce their own cloth and thus stop the unnecessary drain

from their villages of what little they possess, will the A.I.S.A. have justified its existence. For as I have been of late insisting in these columns the message of Khadi is nothing less than its universal use in the villages by local production and local use. The beginning has to be made by inducing cotton cultivation in every village, even in those where it is never known to have been grown. Without decentralization of cotton cultivation, universal manufacture in villages may not be possible. We have authentic examples of deserts having been turned into smiling gardens by judicious manipulation of the soil. It ought not, therefore, to be impossible to grow enough cotton in every village for local use. Not only will this cheapen Khadi for the villagers, but it will also improve the durability of Khadi. Experience has conclusively demonstrated that the strength of yarn and the output are affected by the variety of cotton used and the manner of picking, cleaning, ginning, carding and spinning cotton. A material from which the famous Dacca muslin could be produced must demand gentle handling during all the processes it undergoes, before it comes out as *shabnam* or the morning dew.

Harijan, 3-8'-35

67

THE TAKLI

I would request the several workers in various parts of India, who have been seeking to deliver the message of self-reliance in the matter of cloth in villages, to pay their attention to the potentialities of the *takli* as a means of spinning. It has been demonstrated by the inmates of the Satyagrahashram and sister institutions of Wardha that for an average spinner the productive capacity of the *takli*, if rightly handled, is equal to that of the *charkha* in every respect. For a person who is not altogether weak and who wants to spin only during leisure hours, and not

with a view to remuneration, the *takli* is capable of completely replacing the *charkha*. The workers should, therefore, learn the new method of plying the *takli* and introduce it in the villages in preference to the *charkha*. For the aged and the weak the *charkha* would still be necessary. For, the *charkha*, according to the principles of mechanics, is but a *takli* worked by a system of levers. And as one whose muscles are not strong enough to lift up a weight by hand would need the help of a lever to do so, so one who cannot give the necessary momentum to the *takli* by the muscles of his palm, or cannot bear the strain of constantly raising and lowering the arm, would need the *charkha*.

Harijan, 22-3-'35

68

THE DHANUSH TAKLI

You may know that I can spin on the ordinary wheel better, but I have made a point of using only the *dhanush takli*, and I am now almost an expert in it. The reason is that, whereas Lakshmidasbhai cannot execute an order for 25 lakhs of wheels, the people can themselves make as many *dhanush taklis*. It is so easy to make, so cheap, takes very little material and practically no technical skill. It is a wrong policy to manufacture wheels in Sabarmati in order to export them to the Punjab or South India. They should be made locally everywhere, and for that purpose the *dhanush takli* is the thing. Universalization of this will increase production by leaps and bounds.

Harijan, 22-3-'35

69

THREE ESSENTIALS

Assuming the presence of the will among the millions, rapid spread of hand-spinning is possible only by the adoption of the following three things :

1. Use of unginned cotton from the nearest spot when it is not grown on one's own plot.

2. Ginning it on a polished board with an iron or smooth wooden rod and carding the cotton by manipulation of the cotton with fingers assisted by a wooden knife made on the spot. This process is called *tunai*.

3. Spinning the slivers on the *dhanush takli*.

Hand-gins cannot be manufactured to order today. All available unginned cotton should be prepared first by the method explained in 2 above.

Where unginned cotton is not available ginned cotton from factories has got to be used. It too lends itself to *tunai*, though much more time is required for carding by the *tunai* process when bale cotton has to be used. Where a carding bow is available, naturally it will be used. But what is true of ginning is equally true of carding. It is not possible to manufacture bows and gut in a moment. *Tunai* is a method devised and being perfected by Shri Vinoba with an artist's skill and ardour.

When spinning spreads among the millions it will be impossible to supply slivers from a centre or centres. The utmost that is possible is for families or groups to set apart one or two hands per a fixed number for carding. The ideal, the best, and in the long run the quickest, way is for each one to prepare his own slivers. It makes spinning more interesting, and the variety of occupation breaks the monotony.

Harijan, 22-2-'42

THE BOMBAY KHADI BHANDAR

The Bombay Khadi Bhandar is the largest Khadi Bhandar depot of the A.I.S.A. Since a new policy is in the course of adoption, reduction is being made in the staff in keeping with the requirements of the new policy. Hitherto extraordinary efforts have been made to push up sales of Khadi sent from all parts of India and ordered by Shri Jerajani in accordance with patterns designed by his inventive genius. But this effort meant overhead charges out of proportion to the results achieved in terms of Daridranarayan. And it drew the attention of the provincial workers away from their main work which was to make Khadi self-supporting or popular in their own provinces. The universal mission of Khadi cannot be fulfilled without true provincial effort. That can be achieved only by its distribution as far as possible in the innumerable centres of production. No doubt some Khadi will always be required for big cities like Bombay which will never produce it themselves. That will be a healthy demand to be met without extraordinary effort. The rich variety one sees in the city Khadi shops was possible only because the Association put forth the effort to meet the varied tastes of the city public. But time has come, if Khadi is to fulfil its mission, to turn the attention towards centres of production. They are far too few. Every village, if not every home, has to be such a centre even as every home is a centre of production of cooked food. The economy of the kitchen is wholly different from the economy of the books. Even so is the economy of Khadi. The contemplated change, then, means substantial reduction in the staff of large *bhandars* run by or on behalf of the A.I.S.A. It also means reduction in the number, if not disappearance, of certified private producers.

Harijan, 10-8-'35

71

PROCESSES ANTERIOR AND POSTERIOR TO SPINNING

The spinner should himself do all the processes, anterior and posterior to spinning, i.e. he should do all the processes up to weaving. This is the way to Swaraj. Until now we have been producing only commercial Khadi. Commercial Khadi was our children's cart, it taught us to walk ; and it is so even now. To have carding and other things done by others was and even now is like the children's go-cart. As we go on giving up these go-carts, we are going nearer Swaraj Khadi. In the A.I.S.A. production centres if the processes of carding etc. are being done separately all this should, if possible, be stopped now. Man cannot do without compromises. These aids were like go-carts. Therefore they should be given up as early as possible. One who has faith in this and understands the implications, will be the first to give them up.

(From Hindi)

The Ideology of the Charkha, 3-4-'46; p. 92

SECTION THIRTEEN: REORIENTATION OF THE WORK OF THE SPINNERS' ASSOCIATION

72

THE NEW PLAN

Let the readers fully understand the so-called new plan for Khadi. I call it so-called, because what is being done is the logical step, if Khadi is to clothe the villagers, as from the very start it was intended to do. Khadi was never meant merely for the townspeople, it was never meant to bleed the villagers as they are being bled so that the townspeople can live. Khadi was from its inception conceived for the sake of reversing the order though never to bleed the townspeople. To reverse the order was to restore the natural relation. Towns there were before the British arrival. Things were bad enough then. Now they are much worse. Towns became cities. The latter, in spite of their Indian millionaires, lived mainly for the British masters. Khadi was to undo the grave mischief. Mill cloth is the symbol of the slavery of village India as Khadi is or should be the symbol of its freedom, both economic and political. If it cannot be that, it is meaningless. Therefore, any healthy change undergone in the process of Khadi development is to be welcomed.

The defect in the existing development, good though it appeared, was that it was not good enough for the villagers who spun yarn and wove Khadi but did not use it themselves. They neither understood nor appreciated the dignity and value that its use carried. The fault was not theirs. The workers themselves did not understand. The town dwellers had to wear Khadi and do the penance. They were willing to buy penance for a few extra rupees which they could easily spare and be called patriots in the bargain. But how could the Charkha Sangh belie its faith by ignoring the very foundation of Khadi? And so it is employing its

resources to making the villagers Khadi-clad. It naturally begins with the spinners and weavers of hand-spun yarn. If the move succeeds, as it is bound to, there will be after a time, ample Khadi in the city and town markets. Then the only cloth available in India will be Khadi. The A.I.S.A. is diligently working at the consummation. If its researches show that Khadi has no such potentiality, it will have no hesitation in declaring its insolvency. Let the reader remember that it is a science which deals with the psychology of forty crores of people in the machine age. Thus considered, it is a tremendous problem, though at the same time fascinating and interesting. The very defeat, if defeat it is to be, will itself be no defeat. Let it be understood that it is not an attempt to go back to the dark ages when the *charkha* was the symbol of the slavery of the masses. Surely it will be a triumph of human understanding, i.e. of the soul of India, when India makes an effort through the *charkha* to break her bonds asunder. The free man eats the same bread as the slave. The one eats the bread of freedom, the other of slavery.

But if the city dwellers and the town dwellers would learn the glad tidings that the *charkha* has to give, they will willingly employ their leisure time in carding, spinning, and weaving rather than in gambling on the race course or drinking and idling away their time in their clubs. And their children? Why — they could spin for their parents, for the liberty of India and have education of the type that India wants. I was in Rome and Mussolini's officials took pride in showing the graceful manoeuvres of the little children who were being taught all naval tricks. And do the English children do otherwise than learn in their mother-tongue what England needs?

The A.I.S.A. sales depots will be used for a better purpose than before. They will teach the people, who, I hope, will flock to them, all the tricks of spinning and weaving. If they do, they will have all the Khadi they need. Where there is a will there is a way.

Harijan, 21-7-'46

73

THE NEW KHADI EPOCH

One epoch of Khadi has ended. Khadi has achieved something for the benefit of the poor. Now we have to demonstrate how the poor can be self-supporting, how Khadi can become the symbol of non-violence. That is our real work. Our faith in this has to be demonstrated.

The Ideology of the Charkha,; p. 94 Message for the Charkha Jayanti, August, 1947.

74

THE CONFERENCE

I

NEW POINT OF VIEW RE. KHADI

When after about two years of imprisonment Gandhiji as also several other trustees of the A.I.S.A. were released, a conference of the Trustees was called on September 1, 2, and 3, 1944 at Sevagram. Gandhiji attended it on all the days and put forth his new point of view. Below is the substance of his talks :

First Day — 1-9-1944

I have thought a great deal over the subject of Khadi during my detention. I shall briefly state the conclusions I have arrived at.

The most important discovery I made was that the foundation of the A.I.S.A. was weak, so that the Association could be easily wiped out of existence. It had not taken root in the life of the people. The Government could destroy it by imprisoning its leaders. Though some of its activities continued, I saw clearly that the Government could exterminate it at its pleasure. That is to say, my conception that the movement for the revival of the spinning wheel was indestructible, whatever the circumstance, had been dashed to the ground. The work had not been organized on an imperishable basis.

I realized in jail that there was something wrong in our method of Khadi work, which must needs be amended. I had asked India to carry on spinning. I knew how this spinning work was to be carried on. But I did not lay necessary stress on the requisite outlook and the spirit which was to underlie it. I looked at it from its immediate practical aspect. All my co-workers also laid stress on this practical side. So I suffered it, and also lent my helping hand to it. We have gone far in that direction. But today I cannot continue to ask people to spin in that manner.

I contemplated how to work in the future. I saw that our work would be incomplete, so long as we did not carry the message of the *charkha* to every home. That, I thought, accounted for our being far from our ideal. There are seven lakhs of villages in India. Thousands of them do not even know what the *charkha* is. This is our fault and it is because of this fault that we have failed to put Khadi work on a sound basis. You must ponder over it.

All the thought and study I have been giving to this subject lately make me feel that the work would have to be decentralized if it is to spread far and wide and take permanent root.

It is often alleged that workers of the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. if not Gandhites in general, are unintelligent and lifeless. People repose trust in them. But they (the Gandhites) are not able to tell the people what exactly are the problems facing the country and how our programme is calculated to resolve these problems and take us to our goal. On the other hand, Marxian literature is fast increasing in the country and Gandhites are not able to resist the impact of these external forces.

We say that we are devoted to non-violence. If so, we must reveal in our lives the force of non-violence. Every member of the Charkha Sangh should be a living witness of non-violence. If he is a devotee of non-violence or Gandhism, he must be a live wire. Today Gandhism is a word of reproach. It no more connotes something virtuous or praiseworthy. Let us admit we have failed to make non-

violence a part of our being. Otherwise we would find the *charkha* established in every village. I confess that I have failed. Had I been an adept in this art, I would have produced a concrete pattern of reconstructed village life in Sevagram at any rate. But today even if I put the *charkha* in the hands of the people of Sevagram they do not accept it. We teach them how to use it, tempt them by providing them with work, pay them more wages and serve them in various ways, yet all to little purpose.

It is not due to want of sacrifice in us. Amongst us are men and women who have sacrificed much. My head bends low before them. When I think of each of them my heart is deeply moved. My conscience tells me that a country which abounds in persons instilled with such a spirit of sacrifice can never fail. Yet in spite of this sacrifice, we have not yet made our country free. Freedom is coming, perhaps sooner than we believe. But it does not satisfy me. I do not hold anybody guilty. I am only pointing to the situation as it is. We should not feel satisfied with what we have done. We have tried our best, no doubt. But had we been able to develop the work of the Sangh according to the standard we had set before ourselves, there will not be the despair amongst us which we see today. In that case we would have accomplished forthwith a non-violent Swaraj.

I lay before you a hard prescription. If you are prepared for it, well and good. But it should not be accepted in ignorance, nor out of foolhardiness. You should examine it thoroughly. If you agree with me you would wind up the A.I.S.A. and distribute all its property and assets among its workers for carrying on the work. The Sangh need not keep even a pice for future activities. All of us should be convinced that the *charkha* is the symbol of non-violent economic self-sufficiency. If we and the people grasp this significance of the *charkha* not a pice need be spent on propaganda for the *charkha*. Nor need we look to the rich for alms. We shall without effort become the centre of hope, and the people will come to us of their own

accord. They will not go elsewhere to seek work. Every village will become the nerve-centre of independent India. India will then not be known by her cities like Bombay and Calcutta, but by her 400 millions inhabiting the seven lakhs of villages. The problems of Hindu-Muslim differences, untouchability, conflicts, misunderstandings and rivalries will all melt away. This is the real function of the Sangh. We have to live and die for it.

You will argue it is a very big task requiring much intelligence. I tell you that this cannot be acquired by mere study in libraries. We have to develop it by the labour of our hands. This is the idea underlying the Nai Talim according to which the intellect is developed by the effort put forth by the hands and feet. In the same manner, the pursuit of the *charkha* must become the mainspring of manifold other activities like village industries, Nai Talim etc. If we are able to adopt the *charkha* intelligently we can revive the entire economic life of our villages once more.

We must carry on untiring research on the *charkha*. No doubt we have suffered a lot for the *charkha* and made some improvements in it. We have also manufactured scores of *charkhas* but now we have to produce an expert in research (Shastri) who is well-versed in the manufacture of machines. We would like him to devise such *charkhas* as can yield more and better quality of yarn. He should have undying faith in the *charkha*. Such a faith will give him confidence and brighten his intellect. It is no use merely making speeches or giving lectures; we must make scientific experiments, and declare from the housetops the results of our experiments.

Second Day — 2-9-1944

After much reflection last night and this morning I have prepared a draft which I shall now read out for your consideration.

> "1. The village is the centre for the *charkha*, and the Charkha Sangh can realize its highest ambitions only when its work is decentralized in the

villages. Keeping this in view, this meeting of the A.I.S.A. resolves that the following changes be implemented in its present methods of work.

(a) The largest number of workers whose one passion is the *charkha* and whom the A.I.S.A. approves should go to the villages.

(b) The present sales-depots and production-centres should be curtailed.

(c) Training institutions should be developed and teaching courses enlarged.

(d) The Sangh should permit any province or district which wants to be independent and self-sufficient to become so.

.2 A Standing Committee composed of the members of the A.I.S.A., A.I.V.I.A., and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh should be formed in order to issue necessary directions in the light of the new ideology. The three institutions must realize that their task is to achieve perfect non-violence. Complete Swaraj will follow in its wake. The three institutions must be so equipped that the entire government machinery should depend upon them and not vice versa. This means that the workers of these three bodies should have attained in a sense the Gita ideal of Sthitaprajna. They must be men of secure understanding. If this is not possible we should stop making tall claims for the *charkha*. We shall have to lower our ideal and plan our work accordingly.

This united body composed, as suggested above, of members of the three Sanghs should so regularize the constructive work that all political activity will be dependent on it. Today our condition is most pitiable."

Some workers of the A.I.S.A. complained to me that they do not receive any help from Congressmen. But it is our fault that we have not won the confidence of Congressmen sufficiently to make them come to us to help them in village work. If we were capable of doing this, which

Congressman would dare remain outside the Sangh ? Nay, the Congress and the Sangh would then have felt one with each other, and the one would have acted as a supplement to the other, i.e., the Sangh would have carried out the Congress constructive programme, and the Congress would have fought the Government in the legislatures. There would then have been no antagonism between the two.

I have no doubt at all that we have failed to realize the significance of the *charkha* only because of the inadequate manner in which we have done our Khadi work.

It cannot be denied that believers in big industry and industrialization are also the friends of India. But the difference between them and me is like that between the two poles. City dwellers might well follow those who advocate mill production. But if you of the countryside were, even by mistake or oversight, to take to it, the picture of India would be thoroughly changed. Her face would then be altered beyond recognition. Thereby hundreds of millions of our poor people will meet their end, while only a few millions will survive. I do aspire to live for 125 years. But I cannot bear the sight of a crore of people living after reducing to ashes 39 crores. What I have tried to do is to serve the most oppressed and the handicapped, and to keep pace with them. It has been our endeavour to do this work through Khadi during these years. Not many years ago we began. If you feel that no changes are desirable, well and good, but I will not accept defeat. You should come to a decision after weighing all the pros and cons. Who knows when it will be possible for so many of us to meet again ? I have laid my heart open before you.

If you believe that the *charkha* is the supreme symbol of our objective and that we have not been able to achieve our objective by the present methods then our mode of working must needs be changed.

I do not mean to say that all we did so far was absolutely wrong. Whatever we did, we did with devotion to truth. And that is no small matter. Even with our limited funds, we were able to distribute among our village brethren more than four and a half crores of rupees up to date

(1944). The amount we spent in organizing this work was in comparison little. Yet from the standpoint of our objective, the work is not up to the standard. We must not allow ourselves to be weighed down by the commercial aspect of our work. Jawaharlal has sent me a book describing the achievements of the Co-operative movement in China. That movement, it seems to me, is nothing compared with what we are doing here. But judged by our own objective we have done little, very little. We have not yet reached the seven hundred thousand villages. We have done only one per cent of what the mills have done. Then what is there to be proud of ? That is why I say that if we are not prepared to change our methods we shall be reduced to a mere philanthropic institution. If, on the other hand, we want to uphold our claim for Khadi we shall have to live up to it. We should not deceive the public. We must think out ways and means of increasing our strength. If in seeking to change our mode of work you agree that it would be well to close the A.I.S.A. in its present form, rest assured that it would add to your strength.

Third Day — 3-9-1944

Our work had a very humble beginning. When I started Khadi I had with me, apart from Maganlalbhai and others who had elected to live and die with me, Vithaldasbhai and a few sisters. We have travelled a long way since then and today about two crores of people have come under the influence of the *charkha*. By its help we have been able to provide the village people with a large amount of money. But can we still hold, as we have always maintained, that Swaraj is impossible without the *charkha* ? So long as we do not substantiate this claim the *charkha* is really no more than a measure of relief, to which we turn because we can do nothing else about it. It would not then be the means of our salvation.

Secondly, we have failed to carry our message to the crores of our people. They have neither any knowledge of

what the *charkha* can do for them nor even the necessary curiosity for it.

The Congress did accept the *charkha*. But did it do so willingly ? No, it tolerates the *charkha* simply for my sake. The Socialists ridicule it outright. They have spoken and written much against it. We have no clear or convincing reply to offer to them. How I wish I could convince them that the *charkha* is the key to Swaraj ! I have not been able to justify the claim all these years.

Now for my third point : Non-violence is not something of the other world. If it is, I have no use for it. I am of the earth and if non-violence is something really worthwhile I want to realize it here on this earth while still I am alive. And how else can it be realized except in a society which has compassion and other similar virtues as its characteristics ?

If you go to the house of one who has use for violence you will find his drawing room decorated with tigers' skins, deers' horns, swords, guns and such like. I have been to the Viceregal Lodge, I also saw Mussolini. In the houses of both I found arms hanging on the walls. I was given a salute with arms, a symbol of violence.

Just as arms symbolize violence the *charkha* symbolizes non-violence, in the sense that we can most directly realize non-violence through it. But it cannot symbolize non-violence so long as we do not work in accordance with its spirit. The sword in Mussolini's hall seemed to say "Touch me and I will cut you." It gave a vivid picture of violence. It seemed to ask you to touch it and realize its power. So also we must illustrate the power of the *charkha* so that a mere look at it may speak to us about non-violence. But we are bankrupt today. What is our answer to Socialists ? They complain that we have been harping on the *charkha* for years and yet we have achieved nothing.

The *charkha* was there during Muslim rule also. Dacca was famous for its muslins. The *charkha* then was a symbol of poverty and not of non-violence. The kings took

forced labour from women and depressed classes. The same was later repeated by the East India Company. Kautilya mentions in his *Arthashastra* the existence of such forced labour. For ages the *charkha* was thus a symbol of violence and the use of force and compulsion. The spinner got but a handful of grain or two small coins, while ladies of the court went about luxuriously clad in the finest of muslins, the product of exploited labour.

As against this, I have presented the *charkha* to you as a symbol of non-violence. If I did not make it clear to you so far, it was my mistake. You know I am among the maimed and can move but slowly. Yet I do believe that the work done so far has not been a waste.

I shall now pass to my fourth point. We have not yet proved that there can be no Swaraj without the *charkha*. It cannot be proved so long as you do not explain it to Congressmen. The *charkha* and the Congress should become synonyms.

The task of proving the superiority of non-violence is a difficult one. We have to fathom its depths if we are to realize its truth. The world is going to put me to the test. It may declare me a fool for my tall talk about the *charkha*. The task of making the *charkha*, which for centuries had been a symbol of poverty, helplessness, injustice and forced labour, the symbol now of mighty non-violent strength, of the new social order and of the new economy, has fallen on our shoulders. We have to change history. And I want to do it through you.

I hope you follow what I am saying. But if in spite of it you do not believe that the *charkha* has the power to achieve Swaraj, I will ask you to leave me. Here you are at the cross roads. If you continue with me without faith you will be deceiving me and doing a great wrong to the country. I beg of you not to deceive me in the evening of my life.

It is I who am responsible for defects in our working so far. The fault is mine because I have remained the head even when I was conscious of its defects. But let bygones be bygones. Do we honestly believe today that the *charkha*

is the emblem of non-violence ? How many of us are there who believe so from the depths of our heart ?

Now we have the tri-colour flag. What is it but a piece of Khadi of specific length and breadth ? You can well have another piece in its place. But behind that Khadi cloth lie encased your feelings. It is a symbol of Swaraj, a symbol of national emancipation. We cannot forget it. We will not remove it. We are prepared to die for it. So also the *charkha* should be an emblem of non-violence.

What does the *charkha*, as an emblem of non-violence, signify in the economic sphere ? Call it self-sufficiency or what you like. In the name of national reconstruction and self-sufficiency millions are being bled white in Western countries, as also in other countries for their sake. Ours is not a self-sufficiency of that pattern. The *charkha* is the way to get rid of exploitation and domination. I am not so much concerned with words as with the thing itself.

We are familiar with the controversy in our religion as to whether God has a form or no. The believers in form prefer to worship God through an emblem. So if non-violence is to be pursued as an ideal, the *charkha* must be acknowledged as its true form and emblem, and kept ever before view. Whenever I think of non-violence the picture of the *charkha* comes before me. We cannot visualize non-violence in the abstract. So we choose an object which can symbolize for us the formless. That is what the *charkha* does for me and that is why I worship it. Unless you understand and imbibe this spirit behind my worship of the *charkha* you will not gain an understanding of non-violence even for a hundred years. That capacity for non-violence which I find in the *charkha* can also be perceived by you only if you approach it with a heart like mine. That is why I say : Follow me or leave me. If you want to come with me I will give you a scheme and do everything possible. If you have not understood what I mean I am prepared to sit and discuss it with you the whole day. But if you say that you have grasped my meaning when you really have not, you will be deceiving both yourselves and

me. Ours is not an Association for making profit. We do not seek loaves and fishes. There are a thousand fields in which we can serve the country. Why then remain in *charkha* work and sail under false colours? Please do not therefore remain with me under an illusion. Let me go my way alone. But if it were found that I was myself suffering from an illusion and that my belief in the *charkha* was mere idol-worship, either you may burn me to ashes with the wood of the *charkha*, or I myself would set fire to the *charkha* with my own hand.

If the Charkha Sangh has to go, let us wind it up with our own hands. That will put an end to all our struggle. Then the *charkha* which has for the moment put us into a labyrinth of difficulties will be left in the hands of a few who believe in it, and may in their hands prove to be a mighty weapon. If you regard it as sheer folly I certainly have no ambition to run an idiots' association and thus degrade the country. On the other hand, if you can manifest non-violence through the *charkha*, it will not merely move but sweep forward. You will not then have to worry about keeping it alive.

I repeat that you either leave me alone or digest what I say and follow me. I have brought this new idea to you after two years of penitential thinking. I do not know if I have succeeded in conveying my idea to you. If I have been able to carry conviction please do one thing. Those of you who want to remain with me give me in writing that you regard the *charkha* from today as the emblem of non-violence. You have to make your decision today. If you do not or cannot regard the *charkha* as the emblem of non-violence and yet you remain with me, then you will thereby put yourself in an awkward plight and also drag me down with you.

II

DISCUSSION

Next day there was some discussion over a resolution that had earlier been placed before the gathering for consideration. But for want of time no decision could be

taken. Also it was felt that the resolution required more consideration. After the meeting was over the Secretary of the A.I..S.A., Jajuji, discussed this matter with Gandhiji for one hour every day from the Seventh to the Fourteenth October, 1944. The talks were noted down by Swami Anand, and in their revised form are given below :

First Day — 7-10-1944

A United Board

At the outset Jajuji read out the resolution submitted by Gandhiji before the workers of the A.I.S.A. in the September meeting. There was a suggestion in that draft that the A.I.V.I.A. and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh be also consulted while drawing the future plan of work of the A.I.S.A.

J. Should the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Go Seva Sangh and Kasturba Trust be also included in this list ?

G. Of course, inasmuch as they are as intimately connected with the programme of village reconstruction as the A.I.S.A., and have an economic background and outlook. The idea behind the merging of the Sanghs is only that of co-ordinated service of the villages. But the Kasturba Trust may well be kept out.

J. Keeping the Trust out would mean paralysing an organ of the united body. We can easily form a united executive of one or more representatives from each Sangh.

G. We can get our work done through the institutions of the Kasturba Trust, for their work is not anything different from village service. Yet we should not include the Trust in it. When I placed that resolution before the Charkha Sangh the Kasturba Trust was not in my mind. I had only the A.I.V.I.A. and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh in view. My idea was that the heads of these Sanghs should meet together and co-ordinate their activities from the point of view of all-round village service, and influence each other morally without any of them disturbing any of the others in its day to day work.

The only work of the Central Office of the A.I.S.A. should be to watch and give moral guidance. Decentralization consists in bothering little about the practical details of the various centres but regulating the over-all work on moral lines.

I know that I may not be able to get the Go-Seva Sangh, the Harijan Sevak Sangh and others to carry out this policy of decentralization. But as service and total uplift of villages is the basis of all their activity I hope and trust the heads and workers of these Sanghs would of their own accord meet and think jointly how best to organize their work. They would also have to consider, for example, why the work of the A.I.S.A. had to be arrested or modified.

A worker of the A.I.S.A. would hereafter not confine himself to Khadi work alone but regard himself as well a representative of the A.I.V.I.A., the Go-Seva Sangh etc. in the large sense of the term. And in so doing the worker should not feel that all this other work was beyond his sphere and that a new burden was being imposed upon him. If he did so, it would mean that our policy and outlook were not really based on non-violence. Our worker should be able to identify himself with all that requires to be done in the village, that is, with the entire life of the village and yet feel as light as ever.

J. Like the A.I.S.A., should institutions such as the Go-Seva Sangh, the A.I.V.I.A., and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh also depute such workers to the villages ?

G. Exactly so. This is the real meaning of the merging of the Sanghs and of their having a united policy. It does not mean any regimentation of work but it simply connotes working with the united moral strength of all and with a wholesome integrated outlook.

J. Will the A.I.S.A. have to run commercial and welfare departments separately ? I feel that to run all village activities with an all-round outlook and to give general guidance to the workers will be the special function of the joint body of all the Sanghs.

G. I do not think so. The joint body of the various Sanghs can once for all lay down administrative policies. The arrangements so made must be honoured by all the Sanghs, which would greatly facilitate their managerial work. My idea of the united body is that its work will expand like the mighty Krishna river, which starts as a tiny trickle of ten to twenty drops of water and ends as one vast Krishnasagar. So also should flow the ceaseless stream of all-sided work. Such is my conception of the joint body.

Workers

J. The real problem is to obtain suitable workers. You suggest various activities, but we cannot undertake them for want of workers. Then again you insist that we should reach the seven lakhs of villages.

G. Of course, I do. But when you fail I am there all along with you to share with you the blame.

J. So we are to take it that good workers are to be trained. For the present we cannot hope to get thoroughly capable first-grade workers. We shall have to get on with second-grade workers. From among them we shall obtain first-grade ones later.

G. Does the A.I.S.A. have about 2,000 workers?

J. About 3,000.

G. Well, then use them. Place upon them the responsibility for this new type of work. Also allow them greater freedom in their work. We shall have to decentralize even at some risk.

J. I do not quite understand what you mean by decentralization.

G. We shall have to expand the work so that it covers every village. This cannot be done by imposition from without. The workers will have to be allowed to carry on the work themselves, more or less free of regulation by a central authority. Were they to refuse to bear this much burden and wish to leave us we shall let them go ungrudgingly. But we are not going to turn anybody out. I liked your idea of giving Khadi cloth in exchange for hanks

in Maharashtra. This is not yet much in vogue. But it is being done through workers already on our staff. This is the way how work will go on and develop. But workers who create obstructions will have to go. I will have no hesitation in removing them. If they disobey the policy of the A.I.S.A. they will have to quit. And the Sangh is authorized to change its policy from time to time. The plea of the workers that they were not aware of such changes will not be accepted. Compulsory wearing of Khadi, provident fund contributions etc. were introduced in the course of the running of the Association and they were made applicable to all. Those who could not accept them had to go. Workers may leave us in this manner. But we shall not remove them ourselves. Nay, we shall require them to work along the new lines I have indicated. Not for a moment did I think that we would have to disband the existing set of workers and start on a clean slate. Suppose we have five workers at a centre and we feel that more work of various kinds can be carried out there, we shall ask them to take up manufacture of hand-made paper and other village industries also, and if possible at the same time to produce more and more Khadi and sell it in the neighbouring areas. This is decentralization.

Second Day — 8-10-1944

QUALIFICATIONS OF WORKERS: KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE ETC.

J. Please explain what should be the equipment and qualifications of workers.

G. For the present I shall not deal with other institutions but answer your question keeping in view the worker of the A.I.S.A. alone. First, he should know, besides his mother tongue, the language of the province in which he is working as also the national language. I do not feel that knowledge of English is essential. He should know about the economic, social and political condition of the country and also something about the condition of the world. This is rather difficult, it is true, but essential. Unless he knows what is happening in other countries, their

political set-up etc., how can he understand relative conditions in India and where we are bound for ? He must have especially detailed knowledge of the conditions prevailing in and about his place of work.

Khadi

So much in regard to his general preparation, which is only a preliminary part of his equipment. In regard to Khadi, he should not only have thorough knowledge of the *charkha*, but he must also be well acquainted with the *takli*. Spinning alone will not do. He must know the entire science of Khadi i.e., evaluating the count, carding, identifying the variety of cotton, the kind of cotton required for a specific type of carding, spinning etc. He must be in touch with the history of improvements in technique viz., how carding reached its present stage, the various improvements effected in the *charkha*. He must also be able to repair and put the *charkha* in order, which means that the worker must know the elements of carpentry as well, for if he is not able to set right the damaged *charkhas* of the villagers, spinning will stop in the village and the cause will suffer.

Other Crafts

I have dwelt upon the *charkha* so much because I regard it as the centre of village uplift. In addition, the worker will have to see what other village crafts can prosper in his village. The first in order among these crafts will be the bullock oil-press. Our worker would have to know its technique which has now been scientifically improved at Maganwadi. Another industry which may be introduced is hand-made paper. This has to be learnt not with the view of supplying paper to the whole country but in order to make the village self-sufficient and capable of earning a little income.

Next to oil and hand-made paper we must revive the hand-chakki (grinding stone) — a vital thing in every village. Otherwise flour-mills which have been a source of anxiety to me for several years will be our fate. Similarly in regard to rice. We must get our people in the villages to

take to hand-pounding of rice or hand-chakkis for husking paddy, for it is a well-established fact that the white polished rice put out by mills is harmful to health.

Agriculture and Cattle Welfare

Next take agriculture. Our villagers depend on agriculture and cattle for ploughing. I am rather ignorant in this respect for I have no personal experience. But there is not a single village where we have no agriculture or cattle. There is the buffalo, but except in Konkan and a few other places it is not much used for agriculture. Our worker will have to keep a careful eye on the cattle wealth of his village. If we cannot use this wealth properly India is doomed to disaster and we also shall perish. For these animals will then, as in the West, become an economic burden to us and we shall have no option before us save killing them.

Our worker, therefore, would have to acquire some knowledge at any rate about these things, and discover a non-violent way of solving them. I do not know whether our non-violent way will succeed or fail. If it fails it will be our fault, not that of non-violence. It means that our sacrifice and efforts were insufficient. In regard to agriculture, we must do our utmost to prevent further fragmentation of land, and to encourage people to take to co-operative farming.

Drinking Water and Sanitation

Next to land is the question of water, not for agriculture but for drinking. The worker will go and examine all the wells in the village. It will be his duty to clean them both inside and around them. He will see how many wells of the village are fit for drinking water, whether the surroundings are clean, and whether there are any public urinals and latrines near them. If they are near the wells, he will explain to the people the dangers involved in having them so near. He will seek their co-operation in having them removed to a distance. He will thus attend to the cleanliness of the entire village. He should have a

thorough knowledge of village sanitation and efficient compost-making. He should convert this knowledge into practice. Of course there will be division of work but it should not be like that of the railway porter showing the green signal or like the woman-worker making soles in a leather factory. Such people are incapable of doing any other work save their own. This extreme division of work is degrading. The village worker should acquire all-round knowlege about building up the whole village. There will be some sewing work in the village, smithy, carpentry, leather work, agriculture, etc. The village worker should seek to bring about co-operation among the workers in these various occupations so as to make them serve as harmonious parts of one whole. This should not be too difficult for a worker resolved to employ his body and mind fully.

Now for my last point. If the worker going to the village has no faith in non-violence, our work must fail. If he concerns himself with economics alone and disregards ethics and morality, all our efforts are of no avail. Non-violence is the basis on which our work is to be built. It will not do to ignore it. Workers must demonstrate non-violence in everything they do. They must be living embodiments of non-violence. If they cannot do this, their work will be but a showy nothing. Merely holding classes on non-violence is of little use.

J. Would it not be better to have two workers instead of one in a village? They could then divide the work between them and one could supplement the other.

G. Many people have asked me this question. I am not going to lay down any definite rule in this regard. I would prefer a worker to go alone. He should tackle the situation single-handed and become fearless in the process. But if one is not enough you may send two. We shall consider the position if lack of finances comes in the way. But so far as I am concerned, I am prepared to go to the length of regarding one worker, if married, as two when both husband and wife serve in the village.

J. Experience often proves the contrary. The wife of a worker is more a handicap to him than a support.

G. That is why I am not going to frame any rules or regulations about it. Do you know that Rajaji insists on workers being married ?

J. Some workers will be of higher calibre than others. How do you like the idea of putting under one good worker five or six ordinary workers working in adjoining villages ?

G. I have had talks about it with several friends. It will not always be feasible. I asked Timappa Naik to train a large number of workers as otherwise his work was likely to suffer. He is a very capable and efficient worker of Karnatak. He maintains himself on about six rupees. He feels that only local workers could be trained at small expense. He has trained such and they are working with him.

Expenditure on the Worker

J. How much should we spend on a worker ?

G. These are days of war-made dearness. I am afraid it may last for a fairly long time. I am prepared to spend rupees fifty on a worker or even a hundred.

J. Besides food for the worker there is the burden of his family, of the education of his children etc.

G. We shall take the middle way. We shall leave out those with many burdens. We shall confine ourselves to a family of four, husband, wife and two children, or at the most five. I think it would be better not to take a bigger unit.

J. Many workers argue that they have the responsibility of maintaining their parents, brothers and sisters or other relatives.

G. We cannot take them.

J. While fixing the allowance of a worker, which was to be considered as of greater importance, his capacity or his family responsibilities ?

G. To Vallabhswami I would give only five, not hundred. But I would pay the maximum to one with a big

family rather than let him go. That is to say, both should live and neither should be envious of the other. Nor should any entertain false hopes.

J. How much response should our workers expect from the villagers? Would it be proper to impose some conditions on villages at the time of selection of our place of work? The situation today is that workers who go to the villages are regarded as moneyed people and villagers think that they should extract from them as much benefit as possible. Consequently the whole work is reduced to nought when the worker leaves the village after working for two years.

G. I think we should not impose any conditions. For example, if we go and settle down for service among the aborigines, what terms can we lay down on them? If we settle down and work resolutely in places where we have already gained some experience, our work will grow and prosper.

In the end everything depends on the worker himself. If he wins the heart of the villagers he will be able to get them to work with him.

Test of a Worker

J. How long may it take for a worker to become self-sufficient? Five years?

G. You yourself say five years.

The worker will go to the village with one month's allowance in his pocket. He will ask for a piece of land from the villagers and build his hut on it. In case he obtains a vacant house he will occupy it. Taking out the *takli* from his pocket he will sit under a tree and spin. If the villagers have their spinning wheels he will repair them and spin along with them. He will also gather the children of the village, play with them, tell them stories, teach them songs and do village cleaning. Apart from his salary I am not going to give him a pie by way of capital to start an industry or anything else. He will have to set up things by the dint of his resourcefulness and love. This

will put to trial his love, his passion for service and his ability.

J. It is a very hard test.

G. Yes. If we have to achieve Swaraj by non-violent means I have no other way.

Third Day — 10-10-1944

How to Achieve Self-Sufficiency

J. How will the workers become self-supporting? Villagers can either give them money or grain, or give them employment. Or they may run an industry and support the worker with a percentage of the profit therefrom.

G. Both courses may be adopted. We shall surely pay the workers. But apart from it the villagers or the worker himself can take up a craft for the sake of the village. It may be possible for a good intelligent worker to work in the village and meet his own expenses as also those of his entire activities by his own intellectual work and take nothing from friends. But earning money thus by the use of intellect alone, is, as I have often said, a misuse of the intellect. All such income must go to the country.

J. If our worker were to live on Khadi production alone, it would not be possible for him to become self-sufficient thereby. He would have to produce commercial Khadi; and to earn profit, he must sell it, send it outside and do various other things.

G. This is not what I had visualized in my scheme. I agree of course that if a village has to be made self-supporting through the production of Khadi alone, the surplus will have to be sent outside.

Once somebody explained that if we did not produce in addition to self-sufficiency Khadi, some amount of other Khadi also, and our villagers had no other means of subsistence like land etc., self-sufficiency Khadi alone would not suffice to provide all their needs. My idea of self-sufficiency is that villages must be self-sufficient in regard to food, cloth and other basic necessities. But even this

can be overdone. Therefore you must grasp my idea properly. Self-sufficiency does not mean narrowness. To be self-sufficient is not to be altogether self-contained. In no circumstances would we be able to produce all the things we need. So though our aim is complete self-sufficiency, we shall have to get from outside the village what we cannot produce in the village ; we shall have to produce more of what we can in order thereby to obtain in exchange what we are unable to produce. Only nothing of our extra produce would be sent to Bombay or far off cities. Nor would we produce things with an eye to export to those cities. That would run counter to my conception of Swadeshi. Swadeshi means to serve my immediate neighbour rather than those far away.

Our outlook must be that we would serve the village first, then the neighbourhood, then the district and thereafter the province. Working on these lines the A.I.S.A. must function *only* as the central protector of this policy. We should not get involved in all sorts of complications. We have three thousand workers and a large number of sales depots. We shall not disorganize them today. But I am simply telling you our new line of approach.

Extent of the Field of Work

J. What should be the extent of a worker's field of work ? Should it be an area of about five miles of his centre ?

G. Yes, sometimes even less. In Bengal and Bihar an area of five miles around the centre would cover many villages.

J. Why should we not define his field of activity as the area which he can cover if he left his centre in the morning, and returned to it after having a round by the evening ?

G. Yes, we can do so.

J. Would the A.I.S.A. have to take up this work first ?

G. Certainly, because the *charkha* is the sun round which other industries revolve like planets. They would

revolve rightly only when the sun's movements are all right. Today the village industries are behaving like comets.

Limitation of Work

J. The work against untouchability sometimes involves the worker in all kinds of difficulties. How far may our worker entangle himself in them ?

G. He should not involve himself in such troubles as would stop his work. But there should be no place at all for untouchability in his personal life. Our worker will draw water from the same well which the Harijans use. He will clean up their wells and take all sanitary steps possible for proper drainage.

J. Then there is the political issue. Suppose my self-respect is wounded in the course of performance of my duties or my freedom is restricted, would it then be proper for me to offer civil disobedience ? It may be that I may keep aloof from other political disturbances, but in case of a general civil disobedience movement the worker cannot remain unconcerned. What should he do under such circumstances ?

G. General civil disobedience means a sort of anarchy in which everybody is a leader. But ordinarily we must follow the orders of the chief or the commander in charge of that movement. Surely none can remain unconcerned in a movement of that nature. Yet the worker would have to explain his position to the President of the A.I.S.A. who would give his opinion after taking all pros and cons into consideration. However, I am not thinking of general civil disobedience today.

Fourth Day — 11-10-1944

Decentralization

J. I could not quite follow your views about decentralization. Will you kindly throw more light on it ?

G. My view is that we should let as many provinces as wish to be free to develop their work as they desire. I would very much like them to take the entire responsibility on their own shoulders and recognize our authority

only in the moral realm. I would allow them to work with complete freedom if they follow my lines, are personally of sparkling character, and are prepared to take risks in honestly implementing our policy. My only condition will be that they should sell all the Khadi they produce in the villages near about the centre of production, the tehsil, the district or at the most the province. They should not, like the people of Chicacole, produce everything for Bombay and use nothing at home.

J. Chicacole is an exception, and is the only production centre in the country for fine Khadi.

G. Yes, even in that case I would ask the producers and sellers to wear what they produce or sell. They may send their articles outside but they must also wear them. In case they go on producing fine Khadi for Bombay but use only mill-cloth themselves, their centre must cease to be run by the A.I.S.A. I would even insist that it be closed altogether.

Our Economics

J. Deducting something from the income of the craftsmen or women towards supply of Khadi to them, we do make them wear some Khadi. But this seems to be a sort of imposition. They do not take to it voluntarily.

G. I may put up with such a situation for a short period. I do not expect people to take to Khadi immediately or to accept non-violence. We must educate them in true economics and in non-violence. An economics which runs counter to morality cannot be called true economics. Our workers can develop an outlook of true economics in the villages only if they work under the inspiration of non-violence and morality.

Their personal conduct should be of the purest nature and they should not be a party to any exploitation of the people. If we try to cover India with Khadi but ignore the miseries of the craftsmen, do not pay them living wages, do not share their weal and woe, or worry little if they are drunkards, it will not do at all. It is better to burn all Khadi to ashes than to pretend to work for the good of the

country in this manner. I would keep the drunkard and give him work, but I would befriend him and sweetly urge upon him daily to abstain from drink. My aim is not to do the work of Khadi only but to enter into the entire life of the villager.

I know that Chicacole Khadi is very popular and that it fetches a good sale in far off provinces; but this pains me very much. If we want to do Khadi work successfully on the new lines in any province, district, taluka or village, we must not make one district lean on any other, or enter into competition with it. All districts must meet their requirements themselves. This would relieve us of our worries about sales. It is quite possible that an implementation of this new policy may for the present reduce a centre to zero. But later on the work is bound to progress. Of course I cannot submit data and figures to prove what I say. What I know, however, is that if Khadi is to disseminate non-violence, we shall have to follow this new policy, come what may.

Separate Trustee Boards

J. Do you mean to say that the work of the A.I.S.A. will hereafter be entrusted to separate Boards of Trustees to be newly formed in each province?

G. I cannot say immediately what exactly would have to be done. I know, however that to promote decentralization such as I want, we would have to do away with the central control now dominating our every activity. Today our machinery is top-heavy. Our approach and method being what they have been hitherto, this was inevitable. It could have been avoided had I followed and insisted from the very beginning on our doing the right thing. It is not that I was not aware that the work was not going on the right lines. But I succumbed to the temptation of doing some work and let the work develop of itself, resulting in the present centralization.

J. Yet we shall have to evolve some sort of constitution. If the work of the provinces is to be entrusted to

some body, registered societies, with at least seven trustees for each, would have to be set up.

Decentralization of Sales

If you allow me I shall soon bring about decentralization in sales. Today Khadi is such a profitable business and so full of opportunities for expansion that dealers and tradesmen are ready to take it up. I am flooded with letters asking me for the transfer of one *bhandar* or the other. But as a clear picture of the coming decentralization is not yet before my eyes I am not able to go ahead. And even were we to entrust Khadi work to some trust or institution we shall have to insist on three things :

(a) Purity of Khadi, (b) Living Wage and (c) Non-profiteering. If we are not able to control these three things the whole business will be reduced to a farce. Whatever is to be done has to be done very carefully. For example, take the case of the A.I.S.A. Every now and then we issue circulars to our branches to raise the wages and to impress upon the workers not to put the spinners to any difficulty whatsoever. Nevertheless, our experience is that it is well-nigh impossible to keep every worker of each centre in full control regarding such matters as accurate determination of the count of the yarn, correct payment of wages without adding or subtracting a pice or two here and there, and many little things of such nature. And this happens even though our worker has no axe of his own to grind. We appealed to purchasers of Khadi to pay a higher price but those engaged in the craft did not receive an adequate wage.

This is as regards the conduct of workers and centres even when run under the direct supervision of the A.I.S.A. If however we introduce decentralization and the control slackens or is almost withdrawn, one cannot say what a fearful mess the certified dealers might not make of it. There is acute rivalry among all those engaged in Khadi work. Even institutions indulge in a lot of profit-making. Under these circumstances if the A.I.S.A. keeps away from commercial sales, it would be a problem as to who should

be entrusted with this responsibility or what sort of conditions or limitations should be imposed on them. Again, if the provinces are to be left free to look after themselves, they do not have enough workers with the proper Khadi outlook, to be entrusted with the work.

G. Is there no way out of this difficulty ?

J. The issue of provincial freedom will not be so difficult in some of the provinces, but it is bound to lead to complications in most of them. For the present, I think, it would be wise to confine decentralization to the district, and not to extend it to the province. The change should not be effected all at once.

Decentralization of Production

G. For the present we may introduce decentralization in production only. It should be binding on the producers to sell in their neighbourhood what they produce. And it must be insisted that the central office should be consulted in case of distant sales.

J. What is the harm if we limit the sale-area of a centre to its tehsil ?

G. We may, but we must see that the producers or those who live in that village or in its neighbourhood wear the Khadi produced. We do of course recognize that Khadi may be required to be produced for other places also.

J. We would ask workers to go to the centres that are well developed and to extend the work on the new lines as far as possible. The A.I.S.A. will withdraw from those places where such workers take up work. Thus decentralization will grow. But one thing is important. We shall ask the workers to sell Khadi where they produce it, or in the tehsil or at the most in the district. The A.I.S.A. will help in disposing of the surplus. There is no loss in this work at present, as we know. Today all the Khadi that may be produced can easily be sold. There is no worry as regards sales but only about transport.

G. Is the Khadi sold in those centres where it is produced ?

J. No, not even in the neighbourhood. Today we have our *bhandars* in the headquarters of the district and sometimes at tehsils also. We have also agents for taking Khadi from the district *bhandar* and distributing it to other places in the district. To those engaged in the craft we supply Khadi after deducting two annas, four annas, or even eight annas in the rupee. But apart from it, most of the Khadi is sold in the cities.

G. As against this, I want the worker to go to his centre and produce only as much Khadi as he can make the people there wear. He must not produce for outsiders. He should not rest content with training people in Khadi production alone but should impart instruction in other crafts also. The earnings from these crafts will also go to the villagers and add to their meagre resources. We shall take the unused or surplus Khadi only if the villagers there tell us : " We are producing Khadi in a larger quantity than we can ourselves consume as we want cash for our other needs. Please, therefore, buy our surplus Khadi." It is quite possible that such villages as produce more Khadi than they use will develop into centres of Khadi production. But I am not thinking now of them. I have in mind only those villages where production of Khadi will be carried on as a supplementary industry and so where the people will not depend for their living only on Khadi but also on other industries. That is how most of the villages will have to be organized. This is decentralization in the true sense of the term.

Khadi Not for Unemployment

J. Agriculture is the main occupation in the countryside. The bullock oil press can also be run but it can provide a livelihood only to a few. It is Khadi alone that can in a large measure relieve unemployment among the poor. But there is little scope for earning money through Khadi produced for self-sufficiency. Should we desire to add a few pice to the coffers of the villagers, we shall have to encourage production of Khadi for sale outside and we shall have to make arrangements for it. Otherwise we

cannot succeed in providing relief to those underemployed villagers who have work only for part of a year.

G. The trouble is that such Khadi will continue to provide occupation to a few people only without spreading everywhere.

J. Spinning I hope, will become universal. Weaving of course will be a skilled craft carried on by a few as it is even today. The fact is that so long as there are mills Khadi production cannot be carried on on a large scale. We began cloth self-sufficiency work in Surgaon. Ours was a five-year programme. Vallabhswami's experience is that people do take to Khadi but not intelligently. Once we withdraw from the centre, Khadi also disappears. Unless the people grasp the place of Khadi in the entire economy of the village they will not stick to it. The benefits derived from self-sufficiency Khadi are so little that it offers hardly any attraction.

G. That also worries me. Vallabhswami's words resound in my ears. Party feeling developed in his village. Fasting had to be resorted to. I feel that behind it all there was a mistake in approach somewhere. We offered inducements to the people, gave them facilities, but these do not serve our purpose. We have to discover to what length Khadi, by its own inherent strength, can carry India forward. So far in our quest we have found that Khadi is saleable in the cities but not in the villages. We have not yet succeeded in making it acceptable to the villagers. If we have been defeated we must confess our defeat. We should learn from our past experience and adopt new methods of work if needed. That is why I say that we should stop producing Khadi for the cities. Today about a crore of rupees worth of Khadi is sold in the cities. We should hereafter make it clear to the cities that we cannot any more supply them ready-made Khadi but will teach them how to produce it, leaving them the option of either producing it themselves or getting it from the producer. I am not enamoured of the sale of one crore of rupees worth of Khadi in cities. We should put into Khadi

work not money but brain and heart. In other words we shall now have ruthlessly to investigate the value of Khadi in terms of its real potentialities. In case we find it does not carry us as far as we claimed, let us give it up or lower our claim, or let us take up some other basic occupation such as agriculture.

Agriculture If Not Khadi

From the very beginning it has been my firm conviction that agriculture provides the only unfailing and perennial support to the people of this country. We should take it up and see how far we can go with it as basis. I would not at all mind if some of our young men serve the country by training themselves as experts in agriculture in the place of Khadi. The time has now come for us to pay attention to agriculture. Till now I believed that improvement in agriculture was impossible unless we had the administration of the State in our own hands. My views on this are now undergoing modification. I feel that we can bring about improvements even under the present conditions, so that the cultivator may be able to make some income for himself from the land even after paying his taxes. Jawaharlal says that any extra income to the peasant through the improvement of agriculture will be swallowed up under one pretext or the other by the alien Government. But I feel that even if it were so, it should not hinder us from acquiring and spreading as much knowledge about agriculture as possible. It may be that the Government will take away any additional income that may come to the villagers through improvements in agriculture. If they do, we can protest and teach the people to resist and make it clear to the Government that it cannot loot us in this manner. I therefore hold that we must hereafter find workers who will interest themselves in agriculture.

J. From the very beginning the question of agriculture as the main problem of the peasantry was before our eyes. But we did not take it up because we thought it too difficult and also because we had to keep in view our

own limitations. Besides, in agriculture the peasant is today dependent on external factors altogether beyond his control. Supposing, for instance, we taught him better methods and he succeeded in producing more, his lot would still continue to be as bad as it always was if in the meanwhile the prices of cotton were reduced by half — a contingency which he can do nothing to prevent. This is the terrible situation confronting him.

G. There is remedy for this also. We did not train him on the right lines. The capitalists induced him to sow commercial crops that would yield them money, so food crops became scarce.

J. This is inevitable where economics is subservient to the ruler or the capitalist.

G. The same is the condition in the field of cattle farming and dairying. The cow and the bullock are intimately tied up with agriculture. In this field also we have failed to play our part. Therefore, our workers going to the villages will hereafter have to be alert and acquire the necessary knowledge to render effective service along all such lines.

Fifth Day — 12-10-'1944

Extension of Khadi Work

J. Before discussing the idea of decentralization further, I would like to place before you the present position of Khadi work. It will help us in our discourse. Khadi work has been carried on along two lines :

(i) Production and sale of commercial Khadi to the utmost extent.

(ii) Extending cloth self-sufficiency as much as possible. Today the A.I.S.A. is blamed for not discharging fully its responsibilities in both these respects.

G. May I interrupt ? Have we carried on sufficient research in regard to the self-sufficiency programme to be able to prove that self-sufficient Khadi is cheaper than mill cloth ? In case we are not able to prove it, our villagers will not take to self-sufficiency and the workers will have to face despair. Now you may proceed.

J. There will be no cause for despair if we once grasp properly the limitations under which Khadi work has to be carried on. For instance, it cannot be speeded up all of a sudden, for so long as there are textile mills Khadi can develop only on public goodwill. Besides, there are other difficulties. Today, for instance, we produce one crore rupees worth of Khadi. Last year we discussed a scheme to increase it to five crores. This meant that ignoring all other considerations, we had to make use of whatever workers were available, irrespective of their quality in order to push through our programme. After careful calculation we reached the conclusion that even so after our utmost efforts we shall not be able to produce more than one and a half times our maximum production, and that it would be quite impossible to increase production to two to four times. Besides there are other dangers in so recklessly increasing the work. For then we shall have to recruit all sorts of workers who are neither conversant with Khadi work nor observe truth and non-violence. This will not only injure the basic policy of the A.I.S.A. but also bring a bad name to it since the behaviour of the new workers may not always be becoming and clean. I am, therefore, not in favour of developing work on such lines.

Cloth Self-sufficiency

So also there are limitations in regard to cloth self-sufficiency. Even if the various processes from cotton-cultivation to ginning, carding and spinning are carried out by the villagers in their own homes, weaving charges are so high that their net saving as compared with the price of mill cloth is very little, so little that the villager is not easily inclined to put himself to all the trouble involved. Besides mill cloth seems more attractive to him than Khadi.

Moreover the reasons underlying our self-sufficiency programme require to be explained to the villagers in a manner which will appeal to them. They must see that only through working for self-sufficiency the entire money

of the village will remain in the village, that they can control the factors that make for their wellbeing, that idle time will be profitably utilized and that the people of the village will become industrious. In other words, self-sufficiency Khadi work can begin to have permanent effect only when carried out as part and parcel of the wider programme of non-violent village uplift or village reconstruction. We can succeed only to the extent to which we learn to work intelligently and with the backing of educated public opinion. Work based on momentary sentiment or emotion does not endure.

Other Village Industries

The same is true about other village industries as well. For the present the bullock oil-press is running well in the countryside. But there are serious misgivings as to whether it will continue always to do so. The fact is that our village economic organization of which Khadi, Chakki and other village industries were the various main organs has collapsed. Further, on account of mill competition, village-made cloth, flour, rice, oil and everything else have become costlier. Should we desire to reinstate them in their proper place we should have to tackle the entire village economy and build it up anew. Concentration and research on any single aspect will be of little avail. Inertia has seized our people. Progress cannot be by leaps and bounds but very gradual. The problem is very intricate indeed.

G. I accept all that you say. That is why for three days I opened my heart before the A.I.S.A. and raised all these issues.

Now we have to do the work anew with the objective of all-round village uplift. Let us see how far we can go. Even if our present activities have to be slackened or reduced to nought for sometime on account of these changes, it does not matter. We have created some sentiment about Khadi among the people. But if there is some error in what we told the people about the significance of Khadi we must pause. If ours was a wrong claim

we must declare our error openly and withdraw our claim.

I would ask city-dwellers to produce their own Khadi. I would forgo the temptation to supply Khadi to them. We shall go and settle in the villages. In case workers want to leave us on account of this change we shall let them go. Unless our head and heart are converted to this extent we cannot achieve the desired result. We of the A.I.S.A. will merely direct policy. But decentralizing our work as much as possible we shall free ourselves from day to day Khadi work completely. Thereafter we shall concentrate our energy and attention on the other activities or crafts carried out in the vicinity of the village we settle in. Only then will the real substance of our work be realized. All these years I remained under the delusion that we had made a good job of it in that we had put four and a half crores of rupees in the pockets of the poor. I became anxious to increase it to sixty crores, and I claimed Swaraj would be in our hands if we produced sixty crores worth of Khadi in a year. Had I persisted along that line, I might perhaps have succeeded. But now I realize that even if I had succeeded what was done in a year might possibly have been undone in the next. Today our main concern should be to lay the foundation for this work as deep as possible.

J. It means that the city workers should curtail their present work (which is mainly concerned with pushing up sales in the commercial way) and start selling Khadi in lieu of yarn. They should also participate in the programme for the revival of other village industries.

G. Exactly. In case we do not do it we shall be betraying ourselves and the world. Today we rejoice in having sold Khadi worth several thousand rupees in one day in the Kalbadevi Bhandar at Bombay.

Khadi Certificate

J. If we arrange to give Khadi in lieu of yarn, and the A.I.S.A. does not do it, private dealers would come forward and say that they would willingly take up the

work, asking us merely to give them certificates. If we agree to it we shall have to look into their accounts, their procedure, their work etc., and we shall get engulfed in a maze of difficulties from which it would be hard to extricate ourselves.

G. Satish Babu says that we should give them freedom in this matter.

J. He holds that the entire production and sale work should be handed over to the people, and the A.I.S.A. should keep aloof.

G. It is essential for us to consider his proposal in detail.

J. In matters of money even good men have been found to have failed in resisting the temptation of earning extra profit. In whatever he does, in paying wages, determining the count etc., the worker has an eye on profit. When, for example, a spinner gives him yarn he takes out a hank of the thickest yarn and pays her for the entire yarn according to the count of that particular hank. Again, if the count is 9½ he will pay for 9. Thus unconsciously he is inclined towards profit. On the other hand, the artisan also employs all possible means to earn more. Human nature being thus what it is, it is very dangerous to hand over Khadi work to private persons.

Khadi Not a Trade

G. I have my answer. I do not know what exactly Satish Babu's proposal means. But in the picture before me there is no question of handing over Khadi work to anybody. We shall say only this much to city-dwellers that if they want to put on Khadi they cannot do so save according to the principle we have laid down. It is not merely a principle of economics but also invariably of morals and ethics. According to it every one has to prepare his or her own Khadi. If there is no weaving arrangement in the city, weavers can be domiciled in the cities, or somewhere in the neighbourhood in colonies. Weaving can be carried on there. There need be no rivalry. We shall explain to the city people that the Khadi we are

at present giving to them is of no use, as they are not able to know the extent of relief that the poor obtain thereby, and that therefore, they should get Khadi woven before their own eyes. Today we ask the city people to take to Khadi on the plea that it supports lakhs of people. But this compels the A.I.S.A. to resort to trade and commerce. Well, if relief of poverty were the sole objective, to how many people can we offer food after all ?

Hence we are not going to lend to Khadi dealers the prestige of the A.I.S.A. We shall withdraw from that field of work so that the certificates will cease to have any meaning. The only limitation that we shall observe is that if there is some extra Khadi left over in a village or locality after meeting the local need, and if that Khadi is useful to the city people we shall permit it to be sold in the cities. But the Khadi should not be produced specially for export to cities. If this means a reduction in our work it matters little. I am sure I am not providing true relief to the people from the way in which I am doing Khadi work today. What I am doing is tempting them by the handsome wages of the A.I.S.A. This is not the way to make the work permanent. If the poor want employment we must provide it. But it must be in such a manner that they can secure earnings from their own neighbourhood instead of depending on distant cities.

J. I would like you to throw more light on this point.

Need for a Fundamental Change

G. Today we are not really able to help the villagers. By offering them three, four, six or eight annas I comfort myself with the belief that I have given them a livelihood. But it amounts to nothing more than a dole, for the work that I am providing them is not of a permanent nature. In case we get control of the State in our hands and by that means close all mills, it may perhaps then be possible to provide them permanent work. But today I cannot hide from them the truth that I have been only trying to fill their idle hours. But this is not enough. I must investigate what work other than spinning can be provided to them in

the village. Only by revising the entire economic life of the village can our work become permanent. But if we merely go on sending to Bombay the Khadi produced in the village, this object can never be accomplished, however high a wage we may pay to the village spinners.

I allotted an hour every day for discussion with you because I believed that through such discussion my own thinking will be clarified. I am convinced that we shall have to introduce fundamental changes in our mode of work. I would like to know your opinion.

New Avenues of Work

J. When we send to the cities the Khadi produced in the villages we provide immediate economic benefit to the villagers. But if we stop doing so what else can we give them ?

G. If I had my way I would say to those whom I have been supporting through Khadi so far that they should get out of this rut and take to some other work. We shall have to find other work for them, as we are doing in Sevagram.

J. The situation here in Sevagram is exceptional. There are so many institutions here. Guests are always coming in, new houses are under construction and various other activities are going on. All this provides work to the people.

G. Everywhere I would try to create a similar situation. We shall have to apply our mind and energy to discover new avenues of work.

Broader Outlook

J. What you say about agriculture, cattle-breeding etc., is perfectly correct. But we should also consider how to provide permanent economic benefit to the villagers through Khadi. Had mill cloth not been there, it would have been easy. But the question is what are we to do when we have the mills.

G. I would explain to the people that they will not get Khadi like mill-cloth. I would try to bring it home to them that if Khadi is dearer the extra money goes to the villager, his family and to the village, and that this provides

security to the economy of the village. I would explain to them the moral aspect as well. Besides, I would teach them other methods of earning in the village. I have now given up the idea that villagers can earn their living through doing Khadi work alone.

J. It means that we have to set them to work by bringing home to them the moral and social value of Khadi and other village industries.

G. Yes, I do not want to confine myself to Khadi alone now.

I am, therefore, thinking of ways and means of improving the condition of the people through a rehabilitation of agriculture, cattle-breeding and all other village industries. My problem will be solved, if I succeed even in half a dozen villages, for as is the part so is the whole.

From this point of view even Vallabhswami's method does not appeal to me, for he emphasizes only Khadi and promises to make the entire village Khadi-clad within a certain period. There was a time when this idea appealed to me immensely, but now I feel that Khadi alone cannot revive the villages. Village uplift is possible only when we rejuvenate village life as a whole, revive all village industries and make the entire village industrious.

Sixth Day — 13-10-1944

Meaning of True Decentralization

J. Today I would request you to throw more light on decentralization. Narrowly viewed, there is even now decentralization in production because production centres are distributed all over the country. But of course all capital is centralized in the Head Office. I believe that the central control existing today is merely a control exercised by the A.I.S.A. in regard to policy.

Looking at the matter from the point of view of capital we must consider under whose initiative the work is to be carried on in the villages hereafter and who is to bear the profit or loss in the end. Now there are three ways of doing this.

Our worker on the spot can carry on all the work. Or, we may work through a committee of villagers who may themselves raise shares, subscriptions etc. Or as a third course the artisans of Khadi can form their own societies and carry on the work as their own. If the worker remains solely in charge we shall have to hand over to him all the assets, money, property etc. Should he then be regarded as a trustee or should some condition be imposed upon him? If the worker carries on his activities with an eye to personal profit there is every likelihood of undesirable developments. I think the best way, therefore, would be to form co-operative societies. Selfish interests may lead to some mismanagement but this fear should not deter us. We may have co-operative societies not only for Khadi but also for oil-pressing, hand-paper etc. In course of time these bodies in the various villages may, if necessary, merge into a union.

G. I do not have much to say on this point. Wherever we can get reliable workers work should be started. There is no harm in beginning simultaneously the three types of experiments you have enumerated. But we can get rid of many worries if we do not hold ourselves responsible for Khadi sales. So long as Khadi remains a saleable commodity, these worries are bound to be there. I also realize that we cannot entirely get rid of them today. But so long as we believe that Khadi, like bread, must be made at home and that we should not maintain ourselves on bazar-made biscuits even if cheaper, we shall have to explain to the people that to use bazar-made goods is to court disaster. If the people grasp the idea, we shall have to devise an easy method of Khadi manufacture at home. Our slogan will be "cloth even like bread". All difficulties will then disappear. The co-operative bodies will then have their own shape and form which need not now be anticipated.

When you said that there was decentralization in Khadi production, I was about to contradict you. Even in Lancashire some cloth is made at home, not for the use of

the home but for the use of the masters. It would be outrageous to call this decentralization. So also in Japan everything is made at home; but it is not for the use of the home; it is all for the Government which has centralized the whole business. Though things are made at home, and made in a better manner than in England, yet the producers cannot keep any of it for their home consumption. The work is done at the behest of the Government or by a few businessmen on its behalf. It is the Government which supplies ships and does everything else to carry such goods to the different markets of the world and thus draw wealth from other countries. The same is happening in Lancashire. Though millions of *dhotis* are made there, yet not a single one is available to any purchaser on the spot. They are exported to the country for which they are scheduled, be it India, Africa or any other. I would certainly not call this decentralization.

Khadi Not for Sale

So also with Khadi. Our artisans produce not for themselves but for the A.I.S.A. to which they give their finished material for wages paid. But this is not decentralization. What I mean by decentralization is that the artisan must produce for his own or his neighbour's use and not for sale. We may be expected to clothe the whole country with Khadi after getting political power. Should we not therefore make such arrangements from today so that we may be able to make the country self-sufficient in clothing in case the future Government of free India were to provide required facilities to the A.I.S.A. and ask it, as an expert body, to do this task? But if the Government of the day were to close all its mills, and to charge us with this responsibility, we are apt to fail as things are today. We should, therefore, know the extent to which Khadi can take us. I myself cannot say that I know it for certain. But what I am quite clear about is that Khadi should not be for sale but for self-consumption. Hence the necessity of changing the present policy of Khadi work. We have before us the task of reconstructing our whole country,

and in this Khadi is an important item. So also there are oil-pressing and other industries. It is only if we look at the problem from the point of view of production for use rather than for sale that the country has everything to gain by our work, and we shall be able to meet the situation squarely without withdrawing a single step when we obtain control over the reins of Government.

J. I presume what you mean is that we should direct all our efforts towards cloth self-sufficiency i.e., towards spinning for one's own consumption.

G. Exactly so. But as I have no personal experience about it I cannot insist on it. I first introduced Khadi and only later studied its implications and experimented with it. I find that I have been deceiving myself. What I gave to the people was money but not the real substance — self-reliance. I gave them money in the form of wages and assured them that it contained Swaraj. People took me at my word and believed me, and continue to believe me. But I have now my own misgivings as to how far such Khadi can lead to Swaraj. I am afraid that Khadi has no future if we continue it as today.

J. Do you visualize a stage in which the Khadi Bhandars running presently in the cities will be closed down ?

G. Of course I do.

J. We shall then have to supply Khadi to the people in lieu of yarn alone.

G. When we saw that we could not proceed without spinning we learnt spinning. But we did not take to weaving. However, now we feel that weavers will also have to be trained in the same manner. Whatever changes we want to introduce we must introduce intelligently and with discrimination.

I may recall what we did about living wages in spinning. We went along certain lines. Slowly it dawned upon us that Khadi so produced was no philanthrophy but an exploitation of spinners. We then raised the wages. I

pleaded for eight annas. The rest of you insisted on three annas. I agreed to your three annas. Then you raised it to four annas. Similarly we may proceed in our new attempt. First you must accept the principle, later we shall proceed in the light of our experience. You have pointed out three possible ways of reorganizing the work on the new basis. Think over them. We have got our machinery in every province. Provincial organizers are already there. Call some of the workers and discuss the matter in detail with them. True, it will mean some curtailment of our present work. But that will not deter me. Even if nobody else spins I shall go on spinning alone. When we started Khadi production I was told that Khadi *dhoti* was impossible to produce. I replied that I would put on sack cloth or a blanket but would not wear a mill *dhoti*. And hardly a month passed when Maganlal produced a *dhoti*; Gangabahen Mazumdar also sent me one and asked me to place an order for any number of them.

Swaraj Through Khadi

J. Before asking Khadi consumers to spin their own yarn we should consider how much we ourselves are devoted to spinning. Let me take the instance of the A.I.S.A. workers. Our rule requires every worker to spin at least 7½ hanks in a month. But we have not had a satisfactory response. Further, the number of spinners among the Khadi customers is quite small. Most of the spinners in the countryside spin only for wages, scarcely for their own use. This is the situation. I wonder how far the experiment you suggest can succeed under these circumstances.

G. At least this much should be clear to all that Khadi is not an occupation or craft merely to earn a livelihood. None of us should harbour this idea. For if Khadi is an industry it would have to be run purely on business lines. The difference between Khadi and mill-cloth would then be that while a mill provides employment to a few thousand people in a city, Khadi brings a crore of rupees to those scattered about in fifteen thousand villages. Both must then be classified as industries, and we would hardly

be justified in asking anybody to put on Khadi and boycott mill-cloth. Nor can such Khadi claim to be the herald of Swaraj. On the other hand, we have claimed that the real significance of Khadi is that it is a means for uplifting the villages and thereby generating in the people the spontaneous strength for Swaraj. Such a claim can then not be sustained.

Strengthening the Villages

It will not do to continue to help the villagers by appealing to the philanthropic sentiments of city dwellers. What is required is that the villagers should be made strong to face life's problems and march ahead. If we encouraged mills, the nation might get sufficient cloth. And if mills are nationalized cloth prices may also come down, people may not be exploited and may earn adequate wages. But our reason for putting forward Khadi is that it is the only way to redeem the people from the disease of inertia and indifference, the only way to generate in them the strength for freedom. If other crafts are also thus revitalized, our villages could be made self-sufficient and self-reliant. They would prepare their own soap from *sajji*-clay. That soap will not have the luring fragrance of soaps turned out in the factories of Tata and Godrej. Its packing also will not be so attractive. But it will have the quality of self-sufficiency even like Khadi. But this grand picture of Khadi as the means of all-round uplift of the villages which I have been putting forward for so long is not being realized. So I feel I must now retrace my steps. As the founder of Khadi, I must not grudge doing so. That is the call of truth. I retrace my steps consciously or intelligently, and not in a mood of defeatism or of cowardice. If there was any exaggeration in my claims for Khadi it is but right that I must own it publicly and rectify it.

J. Our chief claim was that Khadi was a craft whereby those who were forced to remain idle for a few months in the year could have some supplementary earning.

G. No, I did not stop at that. I went further and claimed that it had the capacity to bring Swaraj.

J. That is true, but you did not stress so much its life-giving capacity as you are doing today. About three lakhs of people are employed in Khadi work. They cannot quickly develop the manifold virtues (other than those of self-sufficiency) that you desire. They may do so in course of time. What you want to do today is to stop Khadi sales and make people spin for their own needs, do you not?

G. You are right.

J. But a closure of the sales would mean a suspension of spinning for wages.

G. Of course. But the little amount of spinning we may then have would positively be such as can yield Swaraj. For basically that strength is inherent in spinning.

J. Today we are in contact with about three lakhs of people through Khadi work. Requiring people to spin for self-sufficiency we would reduce it to no more than thirty thousand.

G. These thirty thousand would later grow into three crores. Be it as it may, I at least will not be guilty of betraying the cause. Further, we shall then not have to cajole or coax the villagers and artisans to spin. What we do today is to go to the villagers with a money bag like bankers and promise four or six annas for spinning. Instead, we would enter into the life of the villagers. The workers and the villagers would freely lay bare their hearts before each other. We would raise the wage of the (woman) spinner. I would pay her as much as to a man. But I would tell her clearly that I am not interested in her spinning merely for wage. I would ask her to spin for herself. I would promise to get her yarn woven, her children educated and trained in one craft or another. I would enquire into her budget and promise every assistance. I would try and relieve her of her woes. Had we done this from the beginning and taken the right type of workers with us, we would have assuredly secured freedom by now. But I have no regret for the past.

Our Mistake

J. Do you think that you can get a large number of workers of this type? If so, it is easy sailing.

G. The mistake was undoubtedly ours. We did not keep this point of view ever before us. Nor did we train workers for it. Also we were in too much hurry. Had we devoted ourselves to the task intelligently, we would have got the needed workers.

J. You have said many a time that good workers should go and settle in the villages.

G. Yes, in order that they may make Khadi the emblem of non-violence. If we fail, our claim for Khadi will lose all force.

J. After all we shall have to get our workers from the material that we have in our country today.

G. If that is our attitude there can be no Swaraj through non-violence. In other words, people are not ready for my conception of Swaraj.

I would then go my own way even if I have to work all alone. I would be happy if any of the A.I.S.A., A.I.V.I.A., Hindustani Talimi Sangh or other bodies co-operate with me. It is quite possible that people may not follow us. It would then show that we are full of violence and that the non-violence we talk about is not non-violence but cowardice.

J. That is all right. But the question is one of implementation.

G. We should then renounce the tall claim we have made. We must stick to the truth without hesitation, without flattering ourselves. We must declare that we are weak like everybody else and that we are in no way better. It would then be clear that Swaraj, if and when obtained, will not be due to any special strength of ours.

Seventh Day — 14-10-1944

Training of Workers

J. If your programme of village reconstruction as a whole is to be taken up, we must select and train efficient

workers. We should not encourage production of Khadi for purposes of sale. We should insist on production of Khadi for cloth self-sufficiency, even if it leads to reduction in our present work as a consequence. Its direct meaning is that Khadi would hereafter be given in lieu of yarn alone and not for money. The yarn so obtained would have to be woven. We shall also have to decide when and how far this policy is to be put into effect, whether the rule for complete yarn as against Khadi should be enforced immediately, or we may accept yarn of one-fourth, one-third or half the money price of cloth, and then go on raising the proportion until the stage of demanding cent per cent yarn is reached. Doubtless it is a very difficult task. You will have to labour very hard to make the workers carry out this policy and to get the people to understand it thoroughly.

Then there will be the question of training workers for which we would have to start Vidyalayas in every province and frame syllabuses for them. There is a great dearth of able teachers. Our first grade workers have confined themselves to their particular areas. They seem to think that it is their Sadhana-bhumi, i.e. the appointed place for carrying on their spiritual endeavours, and that they cannot therefore leave it and go elsewhere. You have encouraged this. I do not quite see how the new work can be accomplished unless we divert some of these workers from their field to the training centres. Who else can impart the right attitude and approach to village workers?

G. Khadi work started in the beginning from a single centre. So also now we may begin with only one training centre. We shall prepare graduates there and send them to other centres. They will produce other workers who will start yet more centres.

J. It may involve a lot of time, from five to even ten years.

G. Possibly, but I do not think so. Our first batch will consist of those who have already enough prior preparation, and so they will not take long to go out as full-fledged workers. Again, as soon as they have acquired a certain

amount of efficiency we shall ask them to go out to the villages and add to their store of knowledge by dint of actual experience in the field. I do not, therefore, feel that a large amount of time will have to be spent on training. But even if it is we should not worry. If we do not get workers of the highest quality, it does not matter. We will try to obtain the finest material, but be ready to do with what we can get at present.

J. The workers we got in 1920 proved their worth. Thereafter we did not secure that high type of workers in so large a measure. Some did come indeed and do come, but in very small numbers.

G. The fact is our method was defective and there was little in our programme to attract the better type. There seemed to be little scope for intellectual development in our work. Hence a large number of people did not feel attracted to it. Besides the remunerative attraction present in other fields was not there. But what was worse, a sort of ignorance and inertia characterized the Khadi workers, which made others look down on them. People felt that Khadi workers did not dress properly, looked dirty and were quite often devoid of commonsense. The workers did not have an adequate knowledge of the science of Khadi and so did little to explain it to the people. They were often not in a position to answer the simple questions of those who wanted to know.

We did settle in the villages where we provided work to the villagers. But the intellectual among us did not, to any large extent. The few who worked did not have the attitude of an anxious and earnest devotee eager to explain his viewpoint to the people. If we had we would have become such experts in our work that we would have been in a position to declare before economists, "We know all that you know. But you lack the practical knowledge that we have. This you can learn from us."

New Values

J. True. Our knowledge is incomplete and we have very many defects. But our scale of measuring values is also different.

G. May be, but we must have the capacity to tell them that their scale is not right.

J. But how to compare moral values with material values ?

G. Then you could at least place those moral values before them and prove their worth. So far as the material value of Khadi goes, even Government records show that there is a place for the spinning wheel as a means of relief, like stone-breaking, road-making etc. You also can establish this much that Khadi has an invariable place as a relief measure. But what we are required to prove above all is the necessity for Khadi for establishing a strong, non-violent village economy.

We shall see what difficulties we come across in working the programme of self-sufficiency. Commercial Khadi may continue for a time, but the essential programme of the A.I.S.A. hereafter must be that of self-sufficiency, and workers should concentrate all their thought and energy on it.

(Translated from Hindi and edited)

SECTION FOURTEEN : QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION REGARDING NEW POLICY

75

KHADI ON TRIAL

[A friend enquired whether the new policy of the A.I.S.A. in regard to Khadi was not a failure.]

"To appreciate fully the present policy of the A.I.S.A.," explained Gandhiji, "you have to take in its etiology. In the initial stages the emphasis was on bringing relief to the poor. Incidentally it provided a living link between the classes and the masses, and assumed a political significance. We cannot make further headway on those lines. We cannot, for instance, further increase the wages. Khadi won't bear it. So far, it was spun and woven by the masses. Now it must still be by the masses, but for their own use. The new policy of the A.I.S.A. has not failed. The latest figures show that it is steadily though slowly, making headway.

"There are difficulties. Weaving constitutes the bottleneck. We have not established a sufficient hold on the weavers. The fault, again, is mine. If I had from the very beginning, insisted on all, learning weaving along with spinning, things would have been different today. The working capital of the A.I.S.A. now stands at twenty-five lakhs. It has taken twenty-five years to reach that figure. During that period it had distributed over seven crores of rupees as wages among four and a half lakhs of the poor spinners and weavers, principally spread over twenty thousand villages of India. I do not know of another instance of such a huge turnover on so little capital in such a wide area."

"That is good but by no means unique. The Chinese Indusco did better," remarked the friend.

"That is not a fair comparison," replied Gandhiji. "I studied in detention Nym Wales's book which was recommended to me. Indusco's activities were carried on under abnormal circumstances with the backing of the Chinese National Government. Besides, all its production was war-time production. You need not have gone as far as China for your illustration. The work of the Calicut Mission in South India would have provided a more apt instance. In each case the field was restricted. In the case of Khadi it is trying to serve the whole of India."

"We cannot today attract more artisans by offering better wages. The general level of wages in the country is already so high."

"We do not want to."

"You mean to say you want them to produce for their own use?"

"Yes."

"How can that be made practicable," asked the friend.

"I explained that to Mr. Casey * last year," replied Gandhiji. "I told him that by adopting my scheme, not only could we solve the cloth problem for Bengal, but for the whole of India. The essence of that scheme was that, instead of supplying textiles to the people, they should be taught how to make cloth for themselves and provided the necessary means — instruments, raw materials etc. — for the same. A reasonable time limit should be fixed after which no textiles would be rationed in the area covered by the scheme. In German East Africa, I am told, cloth shortage during World War No. 1 was actually met by the Negroes being induced to manufacture their own cloth. Whether that is so or not, if India made full use of her spinning and weaving tradition which is universal and the matchless hereditary skill of her artisans, she could

* Governor of Bengal.

not only solve her own difficulty but even help the world to meet the present crisis by releasing her mill production, for countries less favourably placed in the matter of cloth manufacture."

"The fact, however, remains that in spite of there being such an acute cloth scarcity, Khadi has failed to step into the breach," persisted the friend. "It has missed the bus."

"Thanks to Government interference," replied Gandhiji. "They arrested Khadi workers, burnt stocks of Khadi and put Khadi production under every conceivable handicap."

"The vacuum is growing. Production charges have already touched the ceiling, and yet the wages that we can offer are not adequate to attract even the unemployed."

"Where are these unemployed?"

"Well, there are one lakh of I.N.A. men."

"I made an offer to them. It has yet evoked no response. You can take the horse to the trough but you cannot make it drink."

"Cannot Government formulate a scheme?"

"It has been done in Madras. It is under examination. Nothing can be imposed from above. Everything has to be worked from below. And those who work them should have faith and conviction and spirit of service. A Government ukase won't do the trick. Governments can assist. As I told Mr. Casey, I am prepared to work out my scheme if it is left to me and the Government accord necessary facilities. That offer still stands."

"The danger," interpolated the friend, "is that, if we stop the supply of textiles to any area, as envisaged in your scheme, it may accentuate the present discontent and even cause an upheaval. There are elements ready to pounce upon and exploit any excuse to foment discontent. Restriction on cloth supply might even be enumerated as an 'atrocity' as prohibition was by a certain section in Bombay. How can we contemplate or invite a disturbance

like that? This is not a constructive approach to the question. It smacks of compulsion."

"Where is the question of compulsion?" asked Gandhiji. "As it is, there is not enough cloth to go round. The stocks of cloth available for distribution being short of the demand, rationing becomes a necessity. The question is only of wise distribution. No stocks may be expected from outside for some time. America and England are making strenuous efforts to increase their cloth production. But it is all needed there. If we nationalize our textile industry and work it on a double shift basis, it would probably solve the problem of cloth shortage, but not of mass poverty. I won't then be able to press the case for Khadi, not because there would be no case but because I won't be able to carry conviction."

"That is not my point," rejoined the friend. "An element of compulsion there is in all governmental measures. Tariff, protection, excise duties — all these are disguised forms of compulsion. It becomes an evil when it is wrongly or unduly used. If a fundamentally unsound and unstable economic situation is sought to be propped up by Government compulsion, there is danger that it will crash one day and spread ruin all around. I am wondering, if the organization of Khadi production on the present lines, is not an instance of that type, whether pure theory does not need to be tempered with a measure of practical realism to suit the changed conditions. For instance, the woollen manufactures in Kashmir are not for self-use. They cater for the market for fancy goods outside Kashmir. They are extremely popular. Now, if we introduce machine carding, they can hold their own against all competition. But that would be against the fundamental Khadi principles. I have been thinking whether a compromise cannot be effected. To run cottage industries with man-power exclusively, has not much prospect of survival in this age of machinery. We may try to canalize economic trends, we may not run against them in a head-on collision. If we could run cottage industries with the help of cheap electricity, for instance,

they would be able to hold their own without losing their essential character. After all, decentralized production is what we want. We might have projects for the development of cheap hydraulic power as an aid to irrigation schemes. They can be in operation in from six to ten years. It will then be possible to take electricity to every village. Shall we, under those circumstances, be able to work Khadi on the present lines? Normally speaking, supply should balance demand. But instead of establishing Khadi on a permanent basis, we are crippling it by artificial restrictions with the result that a lot of corruption and dishonesty has crept in. The same yarn is presented again and again at the Khadi Bhandars as a counterfeit token. Apart from its economic aspect, Khadi has come to acquire a cultural and political significance. People are anxious to adopt it as a uniform. Hospitals would like to have their linen preferably in Khadi. I.N.A. people would want to adopt Khadi uniform. But today, thanks to the new policy, Khadi is nowhere to be had. Only hypocrisy and dishonesty seem to flourish."

"It is open to all those who cannot or do not want to spin," replied Gandhiji, "to go in for mill cloth, whether Indian or foreign. I am walking with my eyes open. This is not the first time in the history of Khadi that demand has outstripped supply and vice versa. Each time heroic measures were adopted and the crisis was overcome. I do not expect a different result this time. Only, we must have faith and patience and the courage to apply the right remedy, which is what I am doing at present. If in the process Khadi dies, I must be prepared to take even that risk."

"That is begging the question," rejoined the friend. "It won't go down with the people. We have got to adjust our policy to the popular need."

"I cannot do that. Having discovered the error, I must correct it. That may take time. Therefore, I have suggested the removal of the Khadi clause from the Congress Constitution. When it was sought to be removed

unsuccessfully at the Assam Congress, it gave me satisfaction. Now I will encourage and welcome abolition. If it has intrinsic merit, Khadi will survive the Congress abolition. If it has not, it will deserve to go under."

"That, however, would not solve our fundamental problem."

"I am afraid, I won't be able to convince you by argument. Time alone will show who was right."

"You said weaving was the bottleneck," resumed the friend. "A weaver, weaving mill yarn, can today earn as much as Rs. 3 a day. The spinner and the weaver of the hand-spun won't work for lower wages."

"I don't want him to," replied Gandhiji. "That is why I have recommended doubling of hand-spun yarn. If he depends on the supply of mill yarn, he is doomed. Mill-owners are not philanthropists to go on providing yarn to the handloom weaver when he enters into effective competition with them. But a weaver working on doubling hand-spun yarn will, in the end, be better off than the mill yarn weaver, for, the former will find steady employment all the year round."

"The very basis of textile industry has been revolutionized," continued the friend. "Now they are preparing synthetic textile fibres from coal, air and water. Felting of cotton fibres with the help of resins is taking the place of weaving. Unless we make sure that our Khadi policy rests on a sound practicable basis and fits into the over-all picture, Khadi is bound to fail."

"It may, but the labour expended on it won't have been wasted," replied Gandhiji.

"No good effort is ever wasted," proceeded the friend. "But the latest orientation of your Khadi policy continues to perplex many a sincere Khadi lover and worker. Their perplexity ought to be removed. Some of them even talk of going in for uncertified Khadi."

"The perplexity won't be removed if they have no faith in Khadi," replied Gandhiji.

"So long as there is demand for Khadi, it ought to be fulfilled even if prices of Khadi have to be raised."

"That means that Khadi will become fancy goods. It won't be right to use a vast organization for such a purpose. Our duty is to find out and remedy if there is any fundamental defect in our Khadi policy and if in the process, it is found that Khadi is not basically a sound proposition, it should be given a decent burial. Today Khadi is on its trial. It will successfully emerge from it only by virtue of its inherent strength and if it lacks that strength, all bother about it will be love's labour lost."

"All I know," finally persisted the friend, "is that where there is widespread and genuine demand for a commodity and the supply falls short, it should be possible to devise ways and means to adjust the economic balance and satisfy the demand in question."

Gandhiji replied : "I can only warn you of the danger. There was a time when we used machine-carded slivers for spinning. We might as well have used mill yarn. For, what is a roving but unspun yarn ? If we had not broken away from it and had not introduced hand-carding, Khadi would have been defunct by now. The late Sir Gangaram said to me : 'Only give up the spinning wheel, concentrate on the handloom and I am with you.' He did not realize, what we know today, that the use of mill yarn is the principal stranglehold on the handloom industry. In hand-spun yarn lies its only salvation. If the spinning wheel goes, the handloom is bound to follow suit. Khadi will cease to have any value in my eyes, if it does not usefully employ the millions. Many of the 'compromises' that have been suggested are such as to take away from it its essential character. The late Sir Fazalbhai prophesied to me when I saw him thirty years ago, that Khadi was ultimately bound to fail. He is gone but Khadi has remained. Maybe a new era has now opened and Khadi is an anachronism in it. Only, I do not feel so."

Harijan, 25-8-'46

DECENTRALIZING KHADI ORGANIZATION

A question discussed at the last meeting of the Charkha Sangh was the devolution of the authority of the Charkha Sangh to local Khadi organizations. It was suggested that the formulation of Khadi policy for each unit of area should be left entirely to local bodies which should be completely independent of the central organization. While Gandhiji was entirely in favour of the maximum decentralization of initiative and responsibility, he was opposed to the creation of local committees of untrained men and women to take the place of Khadi workers. For organization of Khadi work what was needed was a body of technicians and experts, men endowed with business talents and filled with the spirit of service. There was no room in it for personal ambition or power politics. The latter had become the bane of the Congress. To get rid of corruption in the Congress organization he had suggested that it should convert itself into an organization of workers. To introduce an element of democracy into Khadi work would be to kill Khadi. The Charkha Sangh was not a democratic organization in the sense the Congress was. It was an organization created by the Congress for the building up of democracy. Like the Directorate of the Bank of England, it was a business organization first and last. Only it was motivated by an altruistic, not profit motive. A business organization of a democratic body could not be bound by the procedure of the democratic vote.

"We want to disperse in the villages," proceeded Gandhiji. "A Khadi worker can have no use for any other sanction save such as persuasion and service can command. The moment he seeks to arm himself with any other, he kills Khadi."

"To make Khadi universal," finally asked a friend, "you need to inspan the co-operation of everybody."

Gandhiji replied that since Khadi workers were expected to be full servants of the people, their worth if

there was any, could create public opinion in their favour. The need was not for a committee of members who may be a hindrance rather than a help, whereas if their service drew supporters these latter would be a powerful help.

"What would be the authority of the A.I.S.A. after Khadi became decentralized?" was another question.

The answer came quick. It was that the authority of the Sangh would be merely moral and, therefore, more potent than at present. Its function would not be to provide money or material but only to smooth the way for Khadi work by the creation of a moral sanction. It would lend the Khadi workers the use of its name but not seek to impose its will upon them. Its moral authority would be available to anybody who accepted its policy. Even its present assets would be put at the disposal of any unit that was ready and considered fit to claim autonomy, provided only that it guaranteed the right use of the assets allotted to it and bound itself to return the same after a certain period. The Charkha Sangh would have the right of inspection but even that would be at the will of the autonomous unit.

Harijan, 27-10-'46

77

SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND CO-OPERATION

Q. One of the reasons given in favour of hand-spinning is that it makes one self-sufficient. Can one who is self-sufficient serve society more and better than one who is dependent on others? Do you mean to say that there is such a connection between self-sufficiency and social service that the more one is self-sufficient the more is his capacity for social service?

A. In order that we may answer this satisfactorily we must keep in mind the non-violent outlook because truth and non-violence form the foundation of the order of my conception. Our first duty is that we should not be a burden on society, i.e., we should be self-dependent. From this point of view self-sufficiency itself is a kind of

service. After becoming self-sufficient we shall use our spare time for the service of others. If all become self-sufficient none will be in trouble. In such a state of affairs there would be no need of serving anybody. But we have not yet reached that stage and therefore we have to think of social service. Even if we succeed in realizing self-sufficiency completely, man being a social being, we will have to accept service in some form or other. That is, man is as much self-dependent as inter-dependent. When dependence becomes necessary in order to keep society in good order it is no longer dependence, but becomes co-operation. There is sweetness in co-operation ; there is no one weak or strong among those who co-operate. Each is equal to the other. There is the feeling of helplessness in dependency. Members of a family are as much self-dependent as inter-dependent. There is no feeling of either mine or thine. They are all co-operators. So also when we take a society, a nation or the whole of mankind as a family all men become co-operators. If we can conceive a picture of such co-operation we shall find that there would be no need of support from the lifeless machine. Instead of making the greatest use of machinery we shall be able to do with the least use thereof and therein lies the real security and self-protection of society.

The Ideology of the Charkha, 29-11-'45, pp. 86-88.

78

SPINNING AND AGRICULTURE

Q. You are emphasizing spinning more than agriculture. Is there any political reason behind it ? Or is it that spinning is easier than agriculture ? Or is it that all cannot take to agriculture so easily as they can to spinning ?

A. With me there are no such separate compartments as social, economic and political. In what is political there is also the social and the economic. One includes the others, though we have to make such divisions in order to have correct understanding. One of the reasons why I have not laid stress on

agriculture is that my own knowledge of the same is very meagre. How can I therefore enlighten you on the subject by emphasizing it? It is not so in the case of the spinning wheel. I have acquired enough knowledge of it. The second reason is that foreign aggression has destroyed the wheel. There could be no destruction of agriculture. Its form has been so changed that it has increased our slavery. The third reason is that the skill of the hand has a very small place in agriculture. There is hardly any other industry in which the skill of the hand and the cunning of the fingers are so important as they are in the various processes that go to make Khadi. The fourth reason is that the foreign power first takes hold of the land and it controls other things through land. Therefore Government help is very necessary for improvement in agriculture. For these and other reasons I have laid more emphasis on hand-spinning.

(From Hindi)

The Ideology of the Charkha, 29-11-'45, pp. 89-90

79

SILK AND COTTON

Khadi can give employment to crores whereas silk hardly to more than a few thousand. Khadi is a necessity for both the poor and the rich. Silk is a necessity for none but a few who, in order to nourish a religious sentiment, insist on silk garments on certain occasions. Hence when it is a question of choice between silk and Khadi, naturally those who have the welfare of the starving millions at heart will always choose Khadi. And the very object of the All-India Spinners' Association requires it to give the first place always to Khadi made of cotton. I say Khadi made of cotton in order to avoid confusion in the minds of those who have seen the wider definition of Khadi as being cloth hand-spun and hand-woven out of cotton, silk or wool. This wide definition was and is necessary in order to cover woollen and silken hand-spuns when the latter two are

used not to supplant cotton hand-spuns but to supplement them. Thus in winter many people want the warmer woollen or silken stuff.

No one need run away with the idea that the policy I have advocated in these lines disregards the welfare of silk spinners and weavers. Nothing can be farther from my thoughts than this. For I know that, if Khadi dies, indigenous silk dies automatically. Japanese silk and the artificial imitation from the West will sweep every piece of indigenous cloth out of existence. It is the Khadi spirit which has enabled Kashmir woollens and Bengal-Assam silks to hold their own. It is the far-seeing policy of the A.I.S.A. which, in protecting cotton Khadi against all odds, automatically protects indigenous hand-spuns made of wool or silk. Put the three in competition with one another and you dig the grave of all the three. Lastly, let it be remembered that, if cotton Khadi lives but silk dies, the hands left idle due to the death of silk can easily take up cotton spinning and weaving, but if silk displaces cotton, it cannot employ the crores that will be without occupation or chance of it due to the death of cotton Khadi. It seems to me, therefore, to be the obvious duty of all lovers of Daridranarayan to prefer cotton Khadi always when the question of making a choice confronts them. It will be economical in the long run to pay for the present dearer prices for the fine cotton Khadi than for the corresponding fine silk wear.

Harijan, 7-11-'36

80

PAYMENT IN YARN

Q. If partial payment in yarn is necessary for buying cotton Khadi why should the same not apply to 'silk Khadi'?

A. There can be only one answer to this question. Silk Khadi too is Khadi and its purchase should, therefore, also be contingent on the requisite payment of yarn.

Q. Since spinning is a part of the constructive programme, why should not all constructive workers be exempt from paying for Khadi in yarn?

A. There is some confusion of thought in this question. The reason for part payment in yarn, instead of in money, is to give Khadi its rightful place, and in time make yarn current coin. Constructive workers are not exempt from spinning. How can there be any such exemption from *yajna*? Spinning is the necessary *yajna* for every one.

Harijan, 28-4-'46

81

YARN BANK

There are two ideas governing my conception of a yarn bank. First, that all yarn in whatever quantity, of whatever quality and from wheresoever it comes, should be collected in one place. From there it should be sent to the weaver in such a condition as will enable him to weave it with the same speed as he weaves mill yarn. For this purpose all yarn has to be doubled and twisted. Yarn that has not been subjected to this process should not really be reckoned as yarn. There will thus be two kinds of yarn, one doubled and twisted and one single. The former will have a higher value. It will, of course, take time to achieve

this desideratum. In the meantime, yarn will have to be separated and the single thread doubled and twisted and then woven into cloth at the yarn depot or wherever it may be suitable.

The second thing to remember is that just as gold and silver emerge as coin from the mint, so Khadi alone should emerge from a yarn bank. Not until such time as this happens, will the defects in hand-spun yarn be removed and the quality of Khadi improved beyond expectation. This work cannot be accomplished by compulsion. Khadi workers must be selfless, true and of a scientific mind for the easy, quick and voluntary achievement of this noble end.

To achieve it is the real goal of the Charkha Sangh.

Harijan, 7-7-'46

82

INSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION ON KHADI

A Khadi worker writes :

"I give below a recent conversation between the manager of a Khadi Bhandar and some customers. Should Khadi be sold to such persons ?

" *Q.* 'Is this yarn spun by you ?'

" *A.* 'No. I have bought those 8 hanks for Rs. 10.'

" *Q.* To a second customer : 'Are you able to spin all this yarn ?'

" *A.* 'No. This is spun by my daughter. We sell yarn too at the rate of 12 annas per hank.'

" *Q.* To a third : 'You cannot buy Khadi unless you produce the requisite quantity of yarn.'

" *A.* 'It does not matter. So long as I cannot get the yarn, I will buy uncertified Khadi.'

" *Q.* To a fourth : 'Why do you buy Khadi ?'

" *A.* 'Because it is easy to procure.'

" *Q.* To a fifth : 'You are not a regular wearer of Khadi, What will you do with what you have bought ?'

" *A.* 'Today Khadi is looked upon as being in the fashion.'

" *Q.* To a sixth : 'You do not spin yourself. From where then comes this yarn ?'

" *A.* 'A good friend of mine always provides me with yarn.'

"*Q.* To a seventh: 'Why do you always wear either silk or wool Khadi?'

"*A.* 'Because I do not have to give yarn for these.'

"*Q.* To an eighth: 'You have bought a large quantity of Khadi. What will you do with it all?'

"*A.* 'This will last me two or three years. After that it will be seen whether I can get any or not.'"

The above questions and answers are revealing. If the new policy in regard to Khadi is correct and Khadi customers are of the above nature, it proves the necessity for the abolition of the Khadi clause from the Congress Constitution. It is worthy of note that the questions and answers concern eight persons. The Charkha Sangh need not cater for the needs of a single one of them. The Spinners' Association exists only for the poor. Those who wear Khadi, do so either for the sake of the poor or for winning Swaraj or both. The eight customers mentioned above are concerned with neither. If the Charkha Sangh is to prove the rightness of the ideal for which Khadi stands, then its workers must be loyal enough to the new policy and not fear even the closing down of the Sales Bhandars. They must have the strength to bear any consequences in order to set right the mistakes of the past.

The above conversation also holds a warning to the managers of the *bhandars* to be wideawake. They should become experts in the science of Khadi and be prepared to teach customers the inner meaning of Khadi with patience and humility. This may take time but it is worthwhile. If there is faith in the power of Khadi I have no doubt that we shall remain steadfast and thereby inspire others to the belief also. But if workers themselves lack faith then the claim for Khadi will fall to the ground.

I have taken for granted that the conversation has been truly reported.

Harijan, 9-6-'46

SLIGHTING SWARAJ

"I am a middle-class man living in a 12′ × 20′ room in Bombay. I have a wife and child. My kitchen has to be in my living room. I had taken a vow to wear Khadi and have adhered to it up till now. Since the decision that Khadi could only be purchased by giving a certain quota of yarn came into being it has become very hard for a man like myself, living the mechanical life of Bombay to find the requisite time for spinning. Nevertheless I have been spinning 1½ hours daily in order to be true to my pledge. I had no slivers left the other day and, therefore, went to the Khadi Bhandar to buy some. I was asked by the Manager either to come to the *bhandar* in order to make my own slivers or do the carding there and make the slivers at home. Now it is impossible for me with my very limited living space to make slivers at home nor has a man like me the time to go and make them at the *bhandar*. I said, "Either give me slivers or else I shall have to give up spinning." I was told I was at liberty to do what I considered proper. I realize that a man should be self-reliant and should make his own slivers. But I feel that this is impossible for me, placed as I am in Bombay. Thousands are in the same boat as myself. What should I do ?

"By stopping the sale of slivers the Khadi Bhandar has hit the poor hard. They could earn as much by making slivers as by spinning."

The above letter requires an answer. He says he finds time to spin 1½ hours daily. A man who spins that much every day can accumulate more yarn than necessary for his Khadi needs. It was a mistake on his part to want to buy slivers from the *bhandar*. The Manager gave him the correct reply. Where there is room for spinning there is also room for *tunai* (new carding method) or *punai* (simpler than *tunai*). If there is no room for the wheel there is always the *takli*. The *Dhanush takli* too takes up less space. Whatever difficulties apply to the individual apply to all. The way to Swaraj lies in not going under but in overcoming them. Necessity is the mother of invention.

Again why should not the facilities for carding, slivering and spinning offered by the Khadi Bhandar be availed of ? The new method of making slivers does not require much space and is not difficult.

Harijan, 19-5-'46

84

ALL ABOUT BHANDARS

An article under the above caption appeared in the *Khadi Patrika* of 3rd June. As it is important I give it in full below :

"It is our intention to make rapid changes in the running of our *bhandars*. In spite of the condition of yarn currency attaching to the sales of Khadi, Bombay people have not yet taken to spinning. Most of the yarn given in exchange for cloth is bought. From the 1st of July, we shall give only Rs. 2 worth of Khadi for one hank and, as a result, the sales of Khadi will go down. One of the main reasons for Khadi sales is that mill cloth is rationed. Many persons who ordinarily wear mill cloth are almost forced as it were, to buy Khadi. We take a statement from every customer as to whether the yarn given in is self-spun or spun by a member of the family or staff. But we have regretfully to admit that many customers do not appreciate their responsibility in the matter of making accurate statements. This irresponsible attitude is not in the best interests of Khadi. Khadi-production aims at self-sufficiency of village India. Other provinces will, therefore, now provide less and less cloth to our *bhandars*. The use of the words 'sale of Khadi' is really inconsistent with the ideal. In the circumstances it is imperative for us to make timely changes in the running of *bhandars*. From July 1st we are closing two branches in Matunga and Dadar. For the last three months we have been giving training in Matunga in all the processes of Khadi. In Dadar, there was some sale of Khadi too, but these activities must now come to an end. In Girgaum, in the Khadi Printing Shop, the A.I.S.A. was running a training centre too. This shop will now be handed back to the trustees of the Khadi Printing Shop who will continue to give instruction in all the processes of Khadi as well as arrange for some sales.

"The reduction of work involves dispensing with the services of fifteen workers.

"Ever since the new policy came into vogue, Gandhiji has been saying that the make-up of the *bhandars* must be changed. In order to fall into line we arranged facilities for teaching and weaving in some places but such outward changes have not connoted the real change. We felt that a change in our mental outlook is what was most needed. Therefore, examination of workers and such other reforms came into force.

"Nevertheless all the changes mentioned above have not enabled us to gain our object. At the time when customers looked upon Khadi as being in the fashion, *bhandars* were purely commercial depots. Today the *bhandar* desires to bring about a change in the mentality of the Khadi wearer. It no longer desires to remain a sales depot. It desires to become a centre for imparting knowledge in all the processes of Khadi manufacture. It desires to become a centre of attraction for weavers and other craftsmen. To this end we must continue undeterred to bring about the necessary changes and *pari passu* change the outlook of Bombay Khadi wearers. Then only will *bhandars* reflect the reality. We expect the customers of Bombay to remain loyal to us in our endeavour."

Readers will note that the success of the purpose, as expressed in the article, rests on the faith, intelligence and capability of the workers.

Harijan, 14-7-'46

That Sales Bhandars may disappear under the new scheme, only means that they should be converted into schools for teaching all the processes of Khadi. Therefore, cotton, *charkhas*, spindles and all other accessories of spinning, carding and ginning should certainly be available there. Above all the Khadi worker should be polite and obliging at all times. If he is not, it will mean the end of Khadi and it will be a tragedy if Khadi workers themselves were to be the cause of its death.

Khadi wearers who spin regularly and give in their self-spun yarn for being woven into cloth should be, as they are, entitled to purchase against cash the amount of Khadi which according to the A.I.S.A. rules, their above-mentioned yarn permits them to buy.

Harijan, 18-8-'46

I have received several letters of complaints about Khadi Bhandars. The gist of these is given below :

1. Khadi in *bhandars* is available only to friends of those in charge or to those who have influence.

2. Even if the *bhandar* is replete with Khadi, the reply the ordinary customer often gets is that there is none.

3. Some *bhandars* have no facilities for having yarn woven into Khadi, while others cannot supply *charkhas* and their accessories.

4. In the circumstances Khadi workers in many *bhandars* earn wages for doing no work. Time and again one's yarn is not accepted on the plea that it is too coarse.

It would not be right to console oneself by saying that all these complaints are untrue. Such conduct as described is unwise, callous and disloyal. None of these defects should obtain in any *bhandar*, much less in Khadi Bhandars. How can Khadi command respect, if its servants behave in the manner described? It is to be hoped that every Khadi Bhandar will become a model of service and thereby not only raise itself but also maintain the honour that Khadi carries.

Harijan, 29-9-'46

1. Every sales depot should be able either to put right any defect in a spinner's *charkha* or replace it with a new one. Charges should be maintained at a minimum. At the same time every spinner should be enabled to acquire the knowledge of putting his own spinning wheel in order.

2. The *bhandars* should register in its books the name and address of every buyer.

3. A printed leaflet of instructions as to how and where to remedy defects should accompany every wheel sold.

4. Reduction in price should be made if there is any defect discovered in the *charkha* sold. Such repairs should be done without charge. Often it would be wise to give a new *charkha* for a damaged one brought to the *bhandar*.

5. *Tunai* should be taught. The sale of readymade slivers should be stopped. Instead, cotton with the seed should be sold.

6. So long as a loom does not ply in every home the *bhandar* must be able to arrange for weaving yarn brought to it.

The upshot of it all is that Khadi Bhandars must give up being sales depots and instead, become workshops having true servants of the nation.

KANU GANDHI

Shri Kanu Gandhi's note is worth study. We do not want to universalize the *charkha* through mass production in one place. Our ideal is to make the *charkha* and all its accessories in the locality where the spinners live. Therein lies the value of the spinning wheel. Anything that goes wrong with it should be put right on the spot and the spinners should be taught how to do so. To teach them

is the duty of the Charkha Sangh. Unless we proceed in this manner Khadi will not be able to replace mill cloth.

Harijan, 20-10-'46

85

SPINNING STILL!

A correspondent writes:

> "I and the members of my family have been regular spinners and wearers of Khadi. Now that we have got our freedom, do you still contend that we should spin and wear Khadi?"

This is a strange question. Nevertheless, it represents the condition of many people. Such persons evidently took to the spinning wheel and Khadi merely mechanically and as one of the means of attaining freedom. These friends forget that freedom was not mere removal of the foreign yoke, though it was the first essential. Khadi represents and represented a way of life based on non-violence. Rightly or wrongly, it is my opinion that practical disappearance of Khadi and non-violence shows that the main implication of Khadi was not grasped by us during all these years. Hence, the tragedy we witness of fratricidal strife and lawlessness on many sides. I have no doubt that spinning and weaving of Khadi are more important than ever if we are to have freedom that is to be instinctively felt by the masses of the villagers of India. That is the Kingdom of God on earth. Through Khadi we are struggling to establish the supremacy of man in the place of the supremacy of power-driven machine over him. Through Khadi we are striving to attain subservience of capital under labour in the place of the insolent triumph of capital over labour. Unless, therefore, all the effort made during the past thirty years in India was a retrograde step, hand-spinning and all it implies must be prosecuted with much greater vigour and far greater intelligence than hitherto.

Harijan, 21-12-'47

SECTION FIFTEEN : THE CONGRESS AND KHADI

86

HOW CONGRESS CAN HELP

Congressmen in general will spread the gospel of Khadi among their neighbours by themselves wearing it not ceremonially but habitually, by spinning themselves, and by helping Khadi workers whenever they are called upon to do so.

Harijan, 10-12-'38

Every Congress office should become a model laboratory and spinning and weaving institute for the organization of villages. And, as I have suggested, Khadi is the centre round which other village industries should revolve and be organized. Congressmen will discover the tremendous possibilities of this kind of service. It is chiefly mental lethargy that is in the way of quick and successful organization of villages. I suggest that, if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing; the palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them against dacoity. So must huge factories. Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well equipped with military, naval and air forces.

Assuming then that Congressmen have understood the meaning and implications of the *charkha*, they would, without a moment's delay, set about qualifying themselves for the service. Assume further that they are novices. Then they will procure some cotton, preferably grown in their villages, taluks or districts. They should gin it with the hand or at the most on a board with the help of a rod.

They will keep the seed and, when they have enough, either sell it or use it for their cattle, if they have any. They will card the cotton with a hand-bow, costing next to nothing. They can improvise one themselves. This carded cotton should be turned into slivers. These will be spun on the *takli*. When they have fairly mastered these processes, they can proceed to speedier ones. They will also put themselves and the members of their families right regarding the use of Khadi. They will keep an accurate record of their daily progress and will learn the arithmetic of yarn.

Congress committees will rearrange their offices with the help of the local A.I.S.A. branch and convert them into spinning and weaving depots. I must warn Congressmen against the fatal error of sending to distant depots their yarn for weaving. The economics of Khadi require that from cultivation of cotton to the manufacture of Khadi and its disposal all the processes should, as far as possible, be gone through in the same village or centre. Thus it is wrong to spin yarn in the Punjab, weave it in Bombay, and sell in Malabar the Khadi thus manufactured. If Congressmen and committees attend to this simple rule when beginning Khadi work, they will not find themselves appalled by the difficulty of the task. If they succeed in their own district, there is no reason why the other 249 districts should not be successfully organized. The reasoning is valid even if villages were treated as units. It must be confessed that we have not as yet one single village organized in that fashion. Certainly Sevagram is not, even though I am supposed to be living in it. My failure, however, need not dismay a worker who will make the organization of his own village his sole occupation.

Harijan, 30-12-'39

87

KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

Several people have recently complained to me that they know men who use Khadi but use no other village articles. They suggest that many Congressmen wear Khadi because it is required by the Constitution. But having no belief in it they never think of anything but their convenience so far as other articles of use are concerned. This I call fulfilling the letter and killing the spirit. And where the spirit is killed the letter is of as much use as a body from which life has ebbed away. I have often said that Khadi is the central sun round which the other village industries revolve like so many planets. They have no independent existence. Nor will Khadi exist without the other industries. They are absolutely interdependent. The fact is that we have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination. Today the cities dominate and drain the villages so that they are crumbling to ruin. My Khadi mentality tells me that cities must subserve villages when that domination goes. Exploiting of villages is itself organized violence. If we want Swaraj to be built on non-violence, we shall have to give the villages their proper place. This we will never do unless we revive village industries by using the products thereof in place of things produced in city factories, foreign or indigenous. Perhaps it is now clear why I identify Khadi with non-violence. Khadi is the chief village handicraft. Kill Khadi and you must kill the villages and with them non-violence. I cannot prove this by statistics. The proof is before our eyes.

Harijan, 20-1-'40

Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support Khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they

derive from it. Without it the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, Khadi could not make further progress. For villages to be able to occupy their spare time profitably the village life must be touched at all points.

Harijan, 16-11-'34

88

SPINNING FRANCHISE

Ramachandran discussed the 'spinning franchise'. He could not understand how the Congress could compel its members to spin. 'Persuasion and not compulsion should be the method.'

'Well then,' replied Gandhiji, enjoying the argument, 'I ask you, has the Congress any right to say that its members shall not drink? Will that be a restriction of the freedom of the individual too? If the Congress exercised that right of enjoining abstinence from drinking, there would be no objection. Why? Because the evils of drink are obvious. Well, I say that in India today, where millions are on the brink of starvation and plunged in utter misery, it is perhaps a much worse evil to import foreign cloth. Think of the starving millions of Orissa. When I went there, I saw the famine-stricken. Thanks to a kind Superintendent, who was in charge of an industrial home, I saw also their children, bright, healthy and merry, working away at their carpets, baskets, etc. There was no spinning, because these other things were much in vogue at the time. But on their faces there was the lustre of joyful work. But when I came to the famine-stricken, what did I see? They were merely skin and bone, only waiting to die. They were then in that condition, because they would under no circumstances work. Even if you had threatened to shoot them if they refused to work, I am sure they would have preferred to be shot, rather

than do any honest work. This aversion from work is a greater evil than drink itself. You can take some work out of a drunkard. A drunkard retains something of a heart. He has intelligence. These starved men, refusing to work, were like mere animals. Now how can we solve the problem of getting work out of people like these? I see no way except that of universalizing spinning. Every yard of foreign cloth brought into India is one bit of bread snatched out of the mouths of the starving poor. If you could visualize as I can the supreme need of the hour, which is to give India's starving millions a chance to earn their bread with joy and gladness, you would not object to the spinning franchise. I take the Congress to be a body of men and women who accept the paramount necessity of spinning. Why should it not ensure the integrity of membership in the body by making it compulsory for every member to spin? And you talk of persuasion! What can be better persuasion than that every member of the Congress spins regularly a certain quantity of yarn every month? How would it be honest for the Congress members to ask people to spin, when they do not spin themselves?'

Ramachandran replied with great earnestness, 'But how can you exclude people who do not spin from the Congress? They may be doing valuable service to the nation in other ways.'

'Why not?' asked Gandhiji. 'What is the reason for the property franchise? Why is it necessary for a man to pay four annas to be a member? And why is age considered a necessary qualification? Would the eight year old violinist prodigy of Italy have the franchise? John Stuart Mill, however clever he may have been when he was seven years old, with his knowledge of Greek and Latin, had no franchise at that age. Why were these prodigies excluded? Some men will have to be excluded under any franchise.'

Young India, 20-11-'24

89

YARN QUOTA FOR KHADI PURCHASE

Q. You persuaded the Congress to adopt Khadi wear for its members and introduced the rule of yarn quota for the A.I.S.A. Khadi. Congressmen are prohibited from using Khadi other than that certified by the A.I.S.A., and now Khadi cannot be had from the Association without paying the yarn quota. Is this not compulsion ?

A. True, the Congress adopted Khadi, the Spinners' Association imposed the condition of the yarn quota, and Khadi which is not certified by the Association is taboo for Congressmen. A certain quantity of yarn has to be given as part of the price of Khadi. All this is true. But I do not find any flaw in this.

That action alone can be compulsion where there is penalty for refusing to do a particular thing. What the form of punishment should be is a different matter. There is no compulsion if I demand the price of Khadi and refuse to give it free. Similarly there is some condition or other attached to membership in any institution. It is also no compulsion if subsequently any change is made in such conditions. The case of uncertified Khadi is also similar. If we go in for uncertified Khadi where is the guarantee of its purity and that a proper wage has been paid to the spinner and the weaver ?

With the advance of time and experience, changes have to be made in the rules and regulations. The only questions to be considered are whether the change fulfils the object, is in keeping with the principle of truth and non-violence and is actuated by selfish or benevolent motives. The answer to all these questions will show that the change was to fulfil the original object and the question of compulsion does not arise. I should be thanked if I ask in lieu of my goods, yarn or any other commodity in place of money.

Let us go a little deeper. We believe that Khadi is only for those who believe that non-violent Swaraj can be

established by making Khadi universal. Spinning, even for a little time, by the greatest number of people will be helpful in obtaining Swaraj. We do not therefore spin under compulsion but of our own accord. An additional gain is that through spinning we come in direct contact with the poor.

Therefore, I am quite clear that there is absolutely no compulsion in demanding part of the price of Khadi in the form of yarn.

(From Hindi)

The Ideology of the Charkha, September, 1945, pp. 83-85.

90

QUESTION BOX

Q. The Congress Constitution makes it incumbent on all its candidates standing for election to be habitual wearers of hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi. Does this not imply that they can only use that Khadi which is certified by the A.I.S.A.?

A. In my opinion it cannot be otherwise.

Q. Is a dealer in uncertified Khadi eligible to hold office in a Congress Committee?

A. It is beyond my conception as to how a dealer in uncertified Khadi can be a Congressman, leave alone an aspirant for holding office in any Congress Committee.

Q. You say that a dealer in uncertified Khadi cannot even be a Congressman much less an office-holder. But what about those who are office-holders in Congress and who deal in mill and even sell foreign cloth?

A. My answer to the second question is equally applicable to the persons referred to in the third. It is for these very reasons that I have recommended the removal of the relevant clauses from the Congress Constitution. Experience has taught us that we are unable to adhere to the rules in question.

Harijan, 19-5-'46

91

CONGRESS AND SPINNING

A Congressman writes :

"You will perhaps agree that in spite of considerable publicity spinning and weaving have not yet found favour with the public to the extent to which they should have done. I think if every Congress Committee — at least those of the big cities — starts a sort of coaching class for the public for this purpose, it can do immense good. Many people — particularly the poor — do not take to spinning because they do not know spinning and weaving, what type of wheels are more convenient to use and give greater output, how these are properly operated upon, how best they should dispose of or utilize the yarn thus produced etc. If once or twice a week, some such classes are undertaken after proper publicity, and people are instructed in this technique by practical demonstrations, things should improve much. At least the experiment is worth a trial by the Congress. Even if regular classes are not held but a group or groups of experts of this technique undertake a tour and give demonstrations and instructions to the public for some days in each city, it can serve the purpose to a considerable extent."

There is a great deal in what the writer says. If all Congress offices became institutions for teaching the art of spinning from the anterior and posterior processes right up to the manufacture of Khadi, I am quite clear that the face of the villages would be changed. These lines are written to emphasize the point made by the correspondent.

Harijan, 18-8-'46

SECTION SIXTEEN: THE GOVERNMENT AND KHADI

92

FOREIGN CLOTH PROHIBITION

When Swaraj is attained, among the first measures of such Government must be prohibition of foreign cloth.

Young India, 19-3-'31

93

HOW TO POPULARIZE KHADI

The ministers are Congressmen. They derive their inspiration from their surroundings. If they had a living faith in Khadi, they could do a great deal to popularize it.

Let me say what Congress ministers and, for the matter, all ministers can and should do.

There may be a minister whose sole business would be to look after Khadi and village industries. There should, therefore, be a department for this purpose. The other departments will co-operate. Thus the Agricultural Department will frame a scheme of decentralization of cotton production, survey the land suitable for cotton production for village use, and find out how much cotton will be required for its province. It will even stock cotton at suitable centres for distribution. The Stores Department will make purchases of Khadi available in the province and give orders for its cloth requirements. The Technical Departments will tax themselves to devise better wheels and other instruments of hand production. All these departments will keep in touch with the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. using them as their experts.

The Revenue Minister will devise means of protecting Khadi against mill competition.

Harijan, 10-12-'38

94

KHADI AS FAMINE INSURANCE AND MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

It has been claimed for Khadi that it has at least three definite functions. It provides a supplementary occupation to the semi-starved and semi-employed millions of India on a scale unequalled by any other occupation. It provides, with the least possible loss, work in famine areas; and it is the best medium of instruction for the boys and girls of India in the primary stage.

But there is one definite condition for the success of Khadi as famine insurance or medium of instruction in the primary stage. What is to be done with the Khadi produced in famine areas and in the schools? If Khadi cannot be sold, it is as useless as the stones broken in many parts of India during famine time. I have suggested often enough in these columns that all the Khadi produced under the last two heads must be taken up by the State. This can be most easily done through the A.I.S.A., if the State guarantees the losses as it guarantees today railway dividends and many other things. Considering price, Khadi is undoubtedly dearer than mill cloth. Therefore it commands a market only among patriots and philanthropists. But those who have no spare cash will not be easily actuated by philanthropy or patriotism. They will go to the cheapest market. It is therefore the business of the State to shut out, or tax heavily enough, such goods as compete with those which, for the general good, should command a market. I think it can be taken as proved that Khadi comes under such goods.

Harijan, 19-8-'39

Even the scale of three annas (as spinners' wages) cannot be sustained if the Provincial Governments do not come to the rescue. They can do so both through legislative and administrative effort. This they will only do

if they will use the A.I.S.A., the A.I.V.I.A. and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh as their own expert, voluntary and honorary agencies. I present them with the prospect of putting several lakhs of rupees into the pockets of the famishing villagers by providing them with employment during leisure hours. But no progress can be made if the manufactures of the villagers do not become current coin.

Harijan, 26-8-'39

95

AID TO WEAVERS

I have always held the opinion that help to the weavers who use foreign or Indian mill yarn is a waste of money and effort. Experience has not changed the view. Nor does it change because in certain provinces the Congress rules. I hold this view because the disappearance of the weaver of mill yarn is a question of time only. In the nature of things it cannot be otherwise. The weavers' only hope lies in a universal revival of hand-spinning. Hand-spinning and hand-weaving are interdependent, never hand-weaving and mill-spinning. I have therefore suggested that if hand-spinning cannot immediately supply the weavers' requirements, they should be induced to introduce hand-spinning, carding, etc., in their own families, if they will not become spinners themselves. Now that in several provinces the Congress rules, the saving of the weaver becomes easier. Thus the Government can encourage spinning on a wide scale, guarantee the loss in Khadi sales as the State guarantees the foreign railway companies. It is the primary duty of the State to guarantee employment of its choice to everyone in need of it. This includes the weavers also. If during the transition stage it is found impossible to guarantee weaving for every weaver, the State has to find him some other employment, profitable alike to the State and the individual. It should be borne in mind that the possibilities of hand-spinning

have not yet been explored by any Government. I am of opinion that such investigation will yield startlingly encouraging results. My argument undoubtedly assumes the elimination of all mills from consideration. No industry, indigenous or foreign, can be allowed to increase unemployment and thus harm the true interest of the community as a whole.

Harijan, 9-9-'39

96

CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME AND GOVERNMENT AID

Q. Do you hope that the constructive programme will be able to achieve its object during your lifetime by mere propaganda? Don't you think that having regard to the natural frailties of man there will be need of legislative aid to make the people take to the constructive programme on a universal scale? Will there be any violation of the principle of non-violence to take such help from the elected representatives of the people especially as we are now in the machine age? If so, how?

A. I have said many a time that we should take aid from the Government only on our own terms. Even beyond this we have to take help from the whole world. There was a time when I felt that we could have little co-operation from the legislators in the matter of the constructive programme. But now I have come to realize that if the representatives of the people go into the legislature we can secure their help. Along with this we must keep in mind that as long as we cannot carry on our constructive programme ourselves, even in adverse circumstances, we cannot properly appreciate its value. Other people, of course, can't. I can say from experience and from a dispassionate view of the matter that the strength of the people has increased in proportion to the progress of the

constructive programme. If we can popularize the constructive programme on a universal scale and bring it into effect through the general public, then Swaraj is in our hands.

The Ideology of the Charkha, 29-11-1945, pp. 109-10.

97

MINISTERS' DUTY

It is legitimate to ask what Congress ministers will do for Khaddar and other village industries now that they are in office. I should broaden the question and apply it to all the Provincial Governments of India. Poverty is common to all the provinces and so are means of alleviation in terms of the masses. Such is the experience of both the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. A suggestion has been made that there should be a separate minister for the work, as, for proper organization, it will occupy all the time of one minister. I dread to make the suggestion, for we have not yet outlived the English scale of expenditure. Whether a minister is separately appointed or not, a department for the work is surely necessary. In these times of scarcity of food and clothing, this department can render the greatest help. The ministers have experts at their disposal through the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. It is possible to clothe today the whole of India in Khadi on the smallest outlay and in the shortest time possible. Each Provincial Government has to tell the villagers that they must manufacture their own Khaddar for their own use. This brings in automatic local production and distribution. And there will undoubtedly be a surplus for the cities at least to a certain extent which, in turn, will reduce the pressure on the local mills. The latter will then be able to take part in supplying the want of cloth in other parts of the world.

How can this result be brought about?

The Governments should notify the villagers that they will be expected to manufacture Khaddar for the needs of

their villages within a fixed date after which no cloth will be supplied to them. The Government in their turn will supply the villagers with cotton seed or cotton wherever required, at cost price and the tools of manufacture also at cost price, to be recovered in easy instalments payable in say, five years or more. They will supply them with instructors wherever necessary and undertake to buy surplus stock of Khaddar, provided that the villagers in question have their cloth requirements supplied from their own manufacture. This should do away with cloth shortage without fuss and with very little overhead charges.

Harijan, 28-4-'46

98

CLOTH SHORTAGE

Shri Manu Subedar who takes interest in Khadi and other village industries, sent me the following note some time ago. But I delayed publication in order that I might make some more effective use of it than giving it in the *Harijan*. I could not think of any. Hence this publication for the use, not only of all Provincial Governments but also of private individuals or organizations, in however limited the field may be.

Here is Shri Subedar's scheme :

"One bale of cotton should be given to every village collectively. The people of the village could spin this yarn. The yarn will be used either for doubling or as weft and cloth could be made.

"One bale would yield approximately 2,400 yards of cloth (or 1,800 according to count).

"If *charkhas* and *taklis* are wanted, they should be supplied by the State. (Manufacture should be organized in jails).

"The cloth, when ready, should be made available to the people of the village on a per head ration basis.

"If and when it is important to collect grain in those villages, where there is supposed to be a grain surplus in the hands of the farmers, the cloth should be substituted only for grain. In

other cases, the people of the village should collect enough to pay for the value of the bale of cotton. In other words, for the price of cotton (which is in the first instance advanced by Government), they would get cloth.

" While cloth shortage would be eased, cotton surplus would also be taken away and it will help the grower of cotton.

" As the village Pancha would have to take over the cotton bale and deal with the whole thing, the beginning would be made of :

(i) village industry,

(ii) joint and collective effort,

(iii) participation and labour contribution by the small and the big ones, and

(iv) elimination of the middleman.

"If the experiment were made in the first instance with twenty thousand villages of the Bombay Presidency, or even two thousand of them, the results would be seen in the course of the next six weeks.

" Government will have to lock up funds for the cotton at the rate of Rs. 225 per bale. Much of this money will return either in the form of grain or in the form of cash. But it will have incidentally marked the beginning of something which the villages can do for themselves.

" Assistance may have to be given where looms are not available, or where the yarn produced is not capable of being used both as warp and as weft. But these are details in organization, which could be attended to by someone at the headquarters of every district.

" On return of price of bale by a village, a fresh bale should be sent to them by Government as an advance."

I may add that this is a variation upon the one suggested by me. In my opinion, the original is probably better. But I attach greater value to Shri Subedar's note because he has worked out the figures, suggested a beginning with a bale of cotton and more specially because he as an economist has thought out his scheme independently of me. It will be easy enough to find flaws in every human scheme. Our business is to remove flaws if we know how or to make a beginning in spite of the flaws which we know but cannot mend. No reform is possible if we wait for perfection.

Harijan, 4-8-'46

99

IF I WERE THE MINISTER

I refer the reader to my note in the *Harijan* of 28th April last *. My views, then expressed, remain unaltered. One thing has created a misunderstanding. Some friends have read compulsion in that note. I am sorry for the obscurity. In it I had answered the question as to what representative governments could do if they wished. I had, I hope pardonably, assumed that such governments' notices too could not be interpreted as compulsion. For every act of a bona fide representative government would assume consent of the voters represented. The voters would mean the whole populace, whether registered as voters or not. With that background, I wrote that the government should notify to the villagers that mill cloth would not be supplied to the villagers after a certain fixed date, so as to enable them to wear Khadi prepared by themselves.

Whatever the meaning of my article of 28th April last, I want to state that any scheme adopted about Khadi, without the willing co-operation of those concerned must mean death to Khadi as a means for attaining Swaraj. Then the taunt that Khadi was a return to the darkness and slavery of the Middle Ages would be true. But I have held the contrary view. Whilst Khadi under compulsion was a badge of slavery, Khadi intelligently and voluntarily prepared, primarily for one's own use, was easily the badge of our freedom. Freedom is nothing if it is not all-round self-help. I, for one, would have nothing to do with Khadi, if it were not a free man's privilege as well as duty.

A friendly critic asks whether Khadi thus prepared could also and at the same time be for sale. Yes, if sale is its secondary use ; not, if manufacture for sale is its only or even primary use. That we began with sale of Khadi shows temporary necessity as well as our limited vision. Experience is a great teacher. It has taught us

* The note referred to is included here as Chapter 97.

many things. Not the least is its primary use. But it is by no means the last. But I must leave this fascinating field of speculation and proceed definitely to answer the question put in the heading.

My first business as the Minister in charge of revival of the villages as the centre of all governmental activity, would be to find out from among the Permanent Service honest and incorruptible men capable for the work. I would put the best among them in touch with the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A., creations of the Congress, and bring in a scheme for giving the village-crafts the greatest encouragement. I would stipulate, there should be no compulsion on the villagers, that they must not slave for others and that they should be taught to help themselves and rely upon their own labour and skill for the production of articles of food, cloth and other necessaries. The scheme would thus have to be comprehensive. I would instruct my first man, therefore, to see the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and see what it has to say.

Let me assume that the scheme, thus produced, contains a clause saying that the villagers themselves declare that they would not want mill cloth, say, after one year from a fixed date, that they require cotton, wool and necessary implements and instruction, not as a gift but to be paid for on the easiest terms. The scheme provides too, that it will not apply at once to the whole of any province but only to a part to begin with. The scheme further tells one that the A.I.S.A. will guide and assist the working of the scheme.

Being convinced of its soundness, I would give it legal form in consultation with the law department and issue a notification, fully describing the genesis of the scheme. The villagers as well as the millowners and others would have been party to it. The notification will show clearly that it is the people's measure, though bearing the Government stamp. The Government money will be used for the benefit of the poorest villagers, making the largest return possible to the people concerned. It will, therefore,

be probably the most profitable investment in which expert assistance will be voluntary and overhead charges the least item. The notification will give in detail, the whole cost to the country and the return to the people.

The only question for me as Minister is whether the A.I.S.A. has the conviction and capacity to shoulder the burden of creating and guiding a Khadi scheme to success. If it has, I would put my little barque to sea with all confidence.

Harijan, 1-9-'46

100

HAND-SPINNING *v.* MILL-SPINNING

Sometime before the Provincial Ministries throughout India were formed, I had heard that quotas of spindles were offered to the Provinces on pain — if a particular Province did not take its quota — of the refused quota being transferred to the other Provinces. Now that the provincial administrations are in full swing, the question has arisen as to whether these Governments can admit new mills and, at the same time, promote hand-spinning on a national scale. My answer is emphatically in the negative, if the encouragement of hand-spinning is meant to be sincere. Behind the India-wide quota is the fundamental belief that mills alone can and must supply India's needs for cloth and that hand-spun may be permitted to exist for the fastidious few. That was not how hand-spinning was conceived in Congress resolutions and that certainly is not the way that the A.I.S.A. has progressed. If the national Governments have come to the conclusion that hand-spinning has and should have no future, they should not waste a single rupee along the lines followed by the A.I.S.A. If, on the other hand, they share the belief of the A.I.S.A., they should forego their quota even if the foregoing should involve some initial loss. The loss will be demonstrably for the future gain of the masses.

Harijan, 6-10-'46

101

STATE OWNERSHIP *v.* CONTROL

Gandhiji had suggested that in certain areas where the people are prepared to try out the experiment of self-sufficiency in cloth, the Government should prohibit the entry of mill cloth. He had also advised the Provincial Governments that if they were serious about making Khadi universal, they should not erect new textile mills nor permit them to be erected. They could not spend crores on new mills and yet expect the villagers to take their Khadi schemes seriously. The villager was a shrewd person. He would at once begin to suspect their bona fides, if they talked to him of self-sufficiency in cloth and at the same time allowed new textile mills in their province.

A member suggested that the A.I.S.A. might pass a resolution requesting the Government to nationalize all new textile mills and the existing ones also as soon as practicable. Gandhiji demurring to the suggestion explained that they could not ask the Government to nationalize new textile mills when they were telling them that Khadi and the erection of new mills could not go together. Shri T. Prakasam, the Premier of Madras, had already made an announcement to the effect that no new textile mills would be erected in the Madras Presidency. They might ask for the nationalization of the existing mills but he himself preferred putting them under strict State control to taking charge of and running them as a State concern. As a believer in non-violence he believed in trusteeship. He wanted a peaceful conversion of mill-owners, so that the mill-owners and their employees would all come under social control voluntarily. That meant that though, for instance, X might continue to be the legal owner, he would only take such commission out of the profits for himself as was warranted by his services and sanctioned by the people. The real owners would be the

labourers in the mills. In one of the Tata concerns the labourers were reported to have become profit-sharers. Shri J. R. D. Tata's speech in that connection was worthy of perusal. He (Gandhiji) considered such solution to be the best. Several mill-owners had assured him that they were ready to co-operate in any such scheme, if required, and would prevent further expansion of their textile mills. He deprecated the idea of joint control of the mill industry by the Government, the A.I.S.A. and the mill-owners. "Our job is not to run mills but to ply the little wheel by the hand. Why should we spend time in discussing a thing which lies outside our sphere of action ? I would not shed a single tear if all the mills were to close. If mills flourish, Khadi must die. It might still function as a supplementary occupation for the relief of the poor. But for that you do not need a big organization like the Charkha Sangh." He would, he concluded, be perfectly satisfied if the State exercised control over the textile mills in consultation with them and so far as possible according to their advice.

Question of Subsidy

The question of giving subsidy to Khadi also came up for discussion. The weaving of hand-spun yarn is becoming more and more difficult. The handloom weavers prefer to weave mill yarn. The weaving charges are so high as to render even self-sufficiency Khadi too expensive. "Would it not be advisable," asked Shri Jajuji, "to ask the Government to give those who spin for themselves a subsidy so as to reduce the charges of weaving for self-spinners ? " Gandhiji's reply was that they should not ask for subsidy but ask the Government to help in supplying cotton, the necessary implements and the services of teachers and technical experts to those who would take to spinning for their own cloth requirements. He did not want to have it said that the Charkha Sangh was cashing its influence to make the Government squander money on the whims of cranks and faddists. He wanted no favour for the Charkha Sangh which must stand or fall on its merits. He wanted everybody to feel that nothing had been

given, at the instance of the Charkha Sangh, which had not been paid back tenfold.

Harijan, 20-10-'46

102

KHADI CAN REMOVE CLOTH SHORTAGE

A friend writes that Khadi can help to remove the shortage of cloth in a matter of six months. For this two conditions will be necessary, viz. (1) that the Central and Provincial Governments should adopt the policy of encouraging spinning and weaving in every village, and (2) that provincial and all-India leaders should put forth greater efforts to popularize Khadi.

In my opinion it should be worth while and it is the duty of the Congress to fulfil these conditions for the sake of remedying cloth shortage. Our undoubted indifference in this respect shows that we have failed in our duty. The price of cloth having risen so high, the present is the most opportune time to get over this indifference. This can be done by the example and conduct as well as the wisdom of those who have unshakable faith in Khadi. When the Government adopts the policy of promoting the cause of Khadi, control over cloth and over commodities will automatically go.

Harijan, 11-1-'48

SECTION SEVENTEEN: HANDLOOMS

103

HANDLOOM *v.* SPINNING WHEEL

May I point out to the Department of Industries and Commerce, Bombay, that the attempt to introduce the handloom in the homes of agriculturists is foredoomed to failure? A little knowledge of agricultural life will demonstrate the impracticability of such introduction. Hand-weaving is a long process requiring sustained labour and in itself demanding several processes at which more persons than one are required to work at one and the same time. This is not possible in a peasant's cottage. Hence from time immemorial hand-weaving has been a separate occupation and an independent and sole means of livelihood. A peasant requires an auxiliary occupation which he can take up or leave at will. Such an occupation for the millions is only hand-spinning. There are, no doubt, other such occupations for utilizing odd moments. But no other than hand-spinning will be found to serve millions of men and women.

I would also take the liberty of pointing out to the Department that, until they control all the processes cotton has to go through before it is brought to the loom, the latter will act merely as feeder to Manchester, Japan or even Bombay, whereas the business of the Department is or should be to teach the villager to subject the produce of his field to all the processes in his own home or village so that he has a variety of occupation and so that he may not feel stranded and helpless when famine or flood overtakes him and leaves him without crops and without work.

Young India, 14-5-'25

It is said that hand-weaving gives about eight annas per day as against one anna from hand-spinning. Therefore, if a person works for only two hours per day, he will earn from hand-weaving two annas against one pice in the same time from hand-spinning. It is added that one pice would be no economic attraction to anybody, and that if hand-weaving could be presented to the people, it would be wrong to ask them to do hand-spinning *instead.* The protagonists of the handloom contend further that there is no difficulty about getting as much mill-spun yarn as may be required for India's needs, and finally they say that even for the sake of keeping alive hand-weaving, which has hitherto defied the competition of weaving mills, it should be pushed with vigour and determination. Some of the protagonists of hand-weaving even go so far as to say that the hand-spinning movement is mischievous in that it turns people's attention away from the possible industry of hand-weaving and misleads them into supporting an impossible industry which has died of its own inherent weakness.

Let us test this specious-looking argument.

In the first instance, hand-weaving is not a practicable proposition as a supplementary industry, because it is not easy to teach, it has never been universal in India, it requires several hands to work at, it cannot be done during odd moments. It has been and can only be generally an independent occupation and is in the majority of cases the sole occupation like shoe-making or smithy.

Moreover hand-weaving cannot be universal in the same sense that hand-spinning can be. India needs 4,661 million yards of cloth per year. A weaver weaves on an average three-quarters of a yard per hour of rough Khaddar. Therefore, if all foreign, indigenous or mill-made cloth could be excluded, at the most nine million weavers working at the rate of two hours per day would be required to produce the whole of our annual requirements. If it be contended that not so many weavers but so many families would be occupied, then the two annas for two hours

would have to be distributed among many, thus materially reducing the earnings of the individual per day.

Now let us consider the possibilities of spinning. We know that it was at one time *the universal* supplementary industry of India. Millions have not yet forgotten the art, and tens of thousands have even now spinning wheels in their homes. Hand-spinning is, therefore, capable of immediate and limitless extension. And as it has been found that ten spinners supply one weaver, against nine million weavers ninety million spinners would be able to add to their earnings what to them will be a material and welcome addition i.e. at least 25 per cent of their income. I have assumed that very high figure of 40 rupees per year per head to be the average income. Unlike weaving, spinning may be interrupted any moment, and therefore it can be done during all odd moments. Spinning is learnt easily and quickly and the spinner begins to draw some thread from the very commencement.

Moreover it is wrong to rely upon an unfailing supply of mill yarn. Hand-weaving and mill-weaving are not complementary propositions. They are mutually antagonistic, the tendency of weaving mills, like all machinery, always being to displace the product of the hand. If, therefore, hand-weaving could become a supplementary industry on a large scale, it would have to be solely dependent on mills which would naturally squeeze the last pie from the weaver for the supply of yarn and would scrap it at the first opportunity.

On the other hand, hand-spinning and hand-weaving are mutually complementary, as can be today proved from the experience of the existing spinning depots. Even as I write, I have letters from co-workers saying that in their centres they have to send away weavers for want of yarn.

It is little known that a vast number of weavers of mill yarn are in the hands of sowcars, and they must be, so long as they rely upon the mill product. The village economy demands that the weaver should receive his yarn not from the middleman but from his fellow-worker the farmer.

Again so far as can be ascertained there are at present some twenty lakhs of weavers at work. Every additional loom means an outlay of at least Rs. 15. Every additional wheel need not mean more than Rs. 3½. The Khadi Pratishthan pattern costs only Rs. 2½. And at a pinch even an improvised *takli*, which need not cost anything, can be impressed into service.

Thus the spinning wheel appears to be the only foundation on which satisfactory village life can be constructed. It is the centre round which alone it is possible to build up village reorganization.

But it is said that one pice per two hours is no economic attraction to even the poor villager. In the first place, the wheel is not meant for, it is not now presented to, any person who has a more remunerative employment. How is it that thousands of women are today walking a few miles daily or weekly to receive raw cotton and the few pice for the yarn they deliver? If a loom were suggested to them, they would not take it up, they would not have the time or the ability for it. For these therefore, the spinning wheel is their only hope.

'If hand-spinning is all you say, how is it that it has not already been universally adopted?' asks the critic. The question is quite fair. The answer is simple. The message of the wheel has to be carried to a people who have no hope, no initiative left in them, and who would, if left to themselves, starve and die rather than work and live. Such was not the case before, but long neglect has made laziness a habit with them. That laziness can only be removed by the living contact and example of men of character and industry plying the wheel before them and by gently showing them the way. The second great difficulty is the absence of a ready market for Khaddar. I confess that it cannot for the time being compete with mill cloth. I will not engage in any such killing competition. The capitalist may for capturing the market sell his calico for nothing. The manufacturer whose only capital is labour cannot afford to do so. As it is the resources of

Khaddar organizations are taxed to the utmost, in order to create a market for the article. The marvel is that, inspite of heavy odds against it, the movement is making headway. Over twelve lakhs worth of Khaddar was sold only last year. But it is nothing to boast of when one thinks of what needs to be done.

Let there be no confusion of thought. I am not against the handloom. It is a great and thriving cottage industry. It will progress automatically if the spinning wheel succeeds. It is bound to die if the wheel fails.

Young India, 11-11-'26

I have before me a copy of the paper on secondary occupations read by Rao Bahadur S. S. Talmaki, Hon. Secretary, Provincial Co-operative Institute, Bombay. It is an exhaustive paper containing an examination of most occupations that have from time to time been suggested as capable of being introduced as secondary occupations for the villagers. He rejects some and accepts some as possible. Among the possible and promising secondary occupations he mentions hand-spinning, and devotes to it paragraphs which are worthy of careful study by sceptics. I reproduce them below :

> "It is, therefore, premature to think of introducing weaving as a secondary occupation even for a small number of agriculturists, unless and until cheap yarn is made available at their doors and marketing of finished goods is organized on sound lines.
>
> "We have, however, to explore the possibilities of every available industry to supply a secondary occupation capable of employing the vast spare time and energy of the farmers, which at present run into waste. The only possible industry falling under the category of clothing is hand-spinning. It can be made a useful adjunct of every farmer family in the country and is best suited to famine areas, giving useful occupation when all others have failed. Even if the adult males wish to migrate temporarily in search of a more remunerative occupation, the women and children can ply the *charkha* without difficulty and without much technical skill. There can be no caste prejudice against its use, and in fact before the advent of the machine-made yarn the womenfolk of the farmer families supplied the country's yarn. The *charkha* requires very little initial capital and will occupy a small corner of the cottage.

"The service which the *charkha* rendered in days of yore is not denied. But various objections are raised to its capacity as a secondary occupation for agriculturists under the present conditions. The first objection is the low income which it yields, amounting to not more than a couple of annas a day. But is not something better than nothing? Even agriculture itself does not yield to the average farmer more than Rs. 50 a year, which comes to not much above annas two per day. Yet no one on that account will dare to advise the abandonment of agriculture. Another objection is that the yarn produced does not find a ready market. But this difficulty can be got over by producing yarn in each village just sufficient for its own requirements. The third objection is that the farmer nowadays being accustomed to the finer varieties of cloth will not care to purchase the coarse Khadi in preference to the former. But when the farmer produces his own cloth in his own home, no case arises of his purchasing it in the shop, and therefore, the question of giving preference to one or the other does not arise. Thus, if the scope of the hand-spinning industry in the case of agriculturists be limited to the production of yarn sufficient for the requirements of the village people, the difficulty of finding a market for the produce will not arise. Every farmer will be proud to wear the cloth produced by his own labour, however rough it may be. To persuade a person to purchase Khadi may be difficult, but little persuasion will be required for using an article produced by himself. Nor will the question of a subsidy arise, which some advocates of Khadi are pleading for, so long as the questions of sale, purchase and preference are avoided. Moreover it is not as easy to get a subsidy as it is to ask for it. In order to effect maximum saving and to give a little more work to the village, the preliminary processes of ginning and carding must be done there, preferably in each family. The weaving of the yarn should also be done in the village, not individually, but by placing the work in the hands of one or two families. It will give them full-time occupation and enable them to specialize in the art. Perhaps it would be advisable to pay for the work in kind, preferably by yarn. *Gudars*, i.e. thick and strong coloured cloth used as carpets, and inferior carpets used in villages can also be manufactured by the village weavers with thick home-spun yarn. With these possibilities before us, it is very difficult to ignore or despise an industry capable of affording clothing to the whole village population, and of giving full-time occupation to a couple of additional families as weavers, and yet another family of carpenters in each village within its own precincts.

"Wherever hand-spinning with weaving is introduced with success the desirability of eliminating some work of drudgery

must be considered, so as to reserve more time and energy for spinning and its incidental work. For example, flour-grinding, which occupies a large time of the womenfolk, can be done at a common mill for the village driven by a pair of bullocks, as is successfully done in the villages of the district of Gurgaon in the Punjab through the efforts of Mr. Brayne. In fact, manufacture of cloth *in the village for the village* might bring about much improvement in the rural life, for which there is little scope at present for want of funds. It might be possible, in course of time, even to shorten the time taken for spinning itself, by further improvement of the *charkha*, which is sure to come if the industry becomes national, or by the addition of a contrivance to produce two or three threads by a single wheel in place of the one it produces at present. This step towards the improvement of yarn and its rapid production is essential from another point of view, if the ultimate aim of the movement to supply yarn to the present handloom weavers is to be realized. One great handicap in the way of these industrious people is that the mills having obtained a monopoly of yarn sell it to them at a very high price in order to enable themselves to sell mill-made cloth at a cheaper rate. If the *charkha* propaganda is to succeed, it must be directed to the villages with greater vigour and a more thorough-going organization than in the case of towns. The support of the townspeople requires to be propped up by enthusiasm from time to time, whereas in the case of the village it is a question of self-preservation. Though work in the rural areas will be difficult at the start on account of the illiteracy and apathy of the people, yet once its possibilities will be realized, it is sure to take a deeper root there. In order, however, to ensure success and avoid failure, the propaganda must be carried on, not by uninformed enthusiasts, but by persons who have gone through the technique of hand-spinning, which may not take more than a couple of months to master. If in addition to this, they are also trained for about three to six months in the breeding and feeding of cattle and the methods of raising fodder and its preservation by silage, they will be capable of rendering double service to the villagers.

"Hand-spinning coupled with weaving, if introduced in the Indian villages, is capable of producing vast social and economic benefits. The average per capita consumption of cloth in India is estimated at 15 yards per year. Taking only ten yards to be the per capita consumption in the case of villagers for a conservative basis, and the total number of rural population at 288 millions according to the census of 1921, the total cloth required by them would be 2,880 million yards. If by an extensive and systematic propaganda the villagers are encouraged to produce their own

cloth, all the money they pay for it will remain in the villages. Taking the cost of Khadi cloth at the minimum of annas four per yard, the total saving effected by the villages would be 72 crores of rupees per year. Over and above this, the price they have to pay in cash for purchasing cloth from the market should be taken into consideration. That price is not less than 6 to 8 annas per yard. Taking again the lower figure, the additional saving effected by home production at annas 2 per yard would amount to another 36 crores of rupees per year. Thus there will remain in the villages more than one hundred crores of rupees every year on a very conservative basis, and if even a part of it be made available, as it is sure to be, for the work of rural uplift, such as education, sanitation, medical relief, and also the improvement of cattle and agriculture itself, the condition of rural life can be ameliorated at rapid strides.

"Over and above this, take into consideration the great increase in the purchasing power resulting by the reform, amongst so large a number of people, opening up a vast market for the large-scale industries that might be started in the country. Manufacture of the market is a more difficult and yet a more important task than the manufacture of goods. Many an industry of the factory type has remained unexploited in the country for want of a market. They can expect very little scope in the foreign market which has been already captured by the industrially advanced foreign countries. Even in the case of backward countries a consciousness of their own possibilities is rapidly growing. The creation of a home market is, therefore, of paramount importance for the industrial advancement of the country. The simple *charkha* offers this possibility, and it should not, therefore, be treated as negligible."

The Rao Bahadur is probably aware that the All India Spinners' Association is concentrating its attention on organizing hand-spinning in the villages on the self-sufficient basis suggested by him. I commend to his attention the examples of Bijolia and Bardoli. At the same time the towns may not be neglected. So much is town life now dominating the villages that, unless the towns set fashion in Khadi, it becomes most difficult to persuade the villagers to spin even in their own interest and just enough for their own use. Nor is the question of cost quite so simple as the Rao Bahadur imagines. The cotton speculator and the foreign buyer have so disturbed cotton prices and cotton-growing that the villager often finds it apparently cheaper

to buy cloth than to pay for cotton and for weaving. Strange as it may appear, it sometimes happens that the cost of a yard of foreign cloth equals the cost of weaving and, not unoften, even the cost of cotton required for an equal length of hand-woven cloth. I may not go into these intricacies. As a practical spinner I point out the difficulty of the task when there is no State aid and even subtle and subterranean opposition and always indifference to it. Hence the necessity in the initial stage for subsidy and town patronage. Moreover, in these days of democracy, the villagers will not understand the philosophy and the truth of Khadi if a distinction is drawn between towns and villages. Lastly, since pioneers must be found from the towns, a Khadi atmosphere in them is an absolute necessity for nationalizing the reform whose need the Rao Bahadur has so convincingly demonstrated.

Young India, 7-3-'29

104

HAND-WEAVING WITH MILL YARN

Replying to the Saurashtras' address at Madura Gandhiji said :

"You ask me to encourage hand-weaving even through foreign yarn or mill-made yarn inasmuch as, so you say in your address, it is not possible today to find hand-spun yarn of the fineness you require and in the quantity you require. Now I shall tell you as a fellow weaver why I cannot possibly endorse your recommendation. If I endorse your recommendation, I hope to be able to show you that it would be bad for you and bad for the class which I have in view and which you also should have in view. You should, as keen and shrewd businessmen as some of you are, understand that every weaver who weaves yarn which is supplied by foreign mills or even by mills in India, places himself at the disposal of and at the tender mercy of the

mills. You as weavers should realize that this hand-weaving which you are today controlling to a certain extent will in time to come slip away from your hands as soon as the mills of the world or the mills of India are ready to weave the patterns that you are today exclusively weaving. Let me inform you, if you do not know the fact already, that various able mill-owners of the world are making experiments in order to weave the patterns which are today your monopoly. It is no fault of the mill-owners or the mill industry that the mill industry is endeavouring day after day to take away the monopolies and take this trade in its own hands. To make continuous improvements in its machinery and to make continuous encroachments upon the handicrafts of the world is really the objective and the ideal of these great industrialists. Indeed, it is the condition of their very existence that they should try to take this trade also from off your hands. What has befallen the industry of spinning will most decidedly befall the industry of hand-weaving also if the weaver will not take a leaf out of my book.

"That does not mean that you may leave off weaving mill yarn from today. You do not need encouragement from me. But I venture to suggest to you that it is to your interest not to ask me to mix up this mill-spun yarn weaving together with this movement which I am leading in all humility. And it is equally to your interest to support this movement so that, if it becomes stable, prosperous and immovable, every one of you would find a respectable living."

Young India, 13-10-'27

A friend, who at one time swore by the spinning wheel, says in effect :

> "Substitute hand-spinning with machine-spinning. Erect a spinning mill in every *taluka*. Nationalize the profits. Only patriots should work the mills, not for gain, but for love of the country. Distribute the yarn to the local weavers only. The cloth woven should be confined to the respective *talukas*. You thus save waste of time and freight. To start with, organize one *taluka* in this manner and you will render great service."

If a spinning mill is put up in every *taluka*, it will result in nationalizing the exploitation of the many by the few. All cannot be employed in a *taluka* mill. Moreover, we must import the machinery needed for over 2,000 *talukas*. And the experts for managing and working the mills will have to be trained. Mills cannot grow up like mushrooms, as *charkhas* can. The failure of a *charkha* is felt by nobody; the failure of a *taluka* mill will mean consternation among the people of the *taluka* concerned. In my opinion the proposition advanced by the friend is utterly unsound. I have, however, suggested that, if he has faith in his scheme, he should try it. I must continue to paddle my own canoe, because nothing else attracts me.

Young India, 26-6-'24

105
THE PROBLEM OF THE HANDLOOM

We ought to be able to convert handlooms to the use of hand-spun yarn, but we are powerless to do that today. Our *charkha* yarn today is neither of sufficient strength, nor is it produced in sufficient quantity. So long as we cannot produce hand-spun yarn that will stand comparison with the mill yarn in strength and uniformity, the handloom weaver will refuse to handle it and for very good reason too. In the first place, the employment of weak and uneven yarn reduces the quantity of cloth that he can turn out in a given time, and thus affects his earning capacity. Secondly, the handloom weaver today has specialized more or less in higher lines of production while our output of hand-spun yarn of a fine count is extremely meagre, and that too is confined mostly to Andhra. The solution of the difficulty involves a complete mastery of the Khadi science. There are a number of other problems which will have to be successfully tackled before we can cope with the question of the handloom. Only let it be borne in mind that this problem will have to be successfully tackled before the dream of universalizing Khadi is realized.

Harijan, 17-4-'37

The statement that the handloom industry has defied mill competition is only partially true. There are not today half as many handloom weavers as there were, say, twenty-five years ago. There was a time when, as the spinning wheel spun the whole of the yarn required by the nation, the handloom wove all the cloth required. When the mills were established the spinning wheel all but died out, for the very simple reason that it gave a paltry return and was never a whole-time occupation. But the loom offered stubborn resistance, for the reason, among others, that it was a full-time occupation by itself and paid the weaver enough to eke out a living. When the spinning mill came, the weaver fell back upon it for his hanks of yarn. He even welcomed the change because he could get more evenly spun and stronger yarn. Little did he know that he was to become perfectly helpless if the mills for any reason could not supply him with yarn. Unlike the village spinner the mill-owner dictated the price of his yarn. By and by the weaver who wove simple, patternless Khadi could not withstand the mill competition, and he died. And for the past few years the weaver of fancy cloth has felt the pressure from weaving mills. Public taste is slowly but surely changing. If the mills cannot exactly copy the patterns woven by the village weaver, they can, as they do, produce new patterns and by efficient advertising attract customers. Therefore several thousand Orissa weavers are idle for want of custom. A similar cry came to me the other day from Ahmednagar, a strong weaving centre. My advice to them all was that, if these weaving families would but introduce carding and spinning in their homes, they could be wholly independent of mill yarn and enlist the never-failing assistance of the A.I.S.A. It might be that the weavers might not earn as much as before because of part of their time being given to spinning. But now, under the revised policy of the A.I.S.A. which aims at giving one anna per hour to the spinner and is actually giving one and half pice per hour, the weaver would hardly feel the reduction in his income. And in any case a reduced wage is surely better than starvation.

Let it be borne in mind that the weaver, in introducing spinning and carding in his family, has to go in for very little outlay. The wheel he already has. It will no doubt require some improvement. He has to invest in a carding bow costing a few annas.

Harijan, 20-8-'38

106

WORKERS SHOULD LEARN WEAVING

It is now more than 21 years since the Khadi movement began. Still I see that on the one hand, there is a dearth of weavers to weave our yarn and, on the other hand, there are lakhs of weavers in our country who have not been persuaded to weave hand-spun yarn. We must see if there is any flaw on our part for this anomaly. The key to this will be in Khadi workers learning the processes of weaving even as a penance. It is from Khadi workers that we found our best spinners. They alone made progress in spinning possible. Similarly we should have made Khadi workers weave also. It is only when we learn the art of weaving that we shall be able to understand fully the difficulties the weavers have to encounter in weaving hand-spun yarn, and shall be able to discover remedies for them. When we atone for our error, hand-spun yarn will so improve that it will compare well with mill yarn. Probably we may not be able to spin yarn today as strong as mill yarn. Still the difference between the two will not be as much as it is now, and the weavers will not have the aversion to hand-spun yarn which they have today.

(From Hindi)

The Ideology of the Charkha, p. 74, October, '41

With loving patience and knowledge Charkha Sangh workers should try to appreciate the difficulties of the weavers and learn how to remove them. Acharya Vinoba has pointed out one remedy, namely to double and twist

the yarn at the same time that the cones are unwound. If this practice becomes universal, there would be no untwisted hand-spun yarn available for weaving. It is found by experience that twisted hand-spun yarn is any day as weavable as mill-spun yarn, if indeed it is not more so. Since the time of my discharge from my last imprisonment, I have been proclaiming as vehemently as I can that the workers should master the art of weaving as well as they have mastered the art of spinning. Had they not taken to spinning themselves they would not have solved the many difficulties of spinners. They have now to make up for past neglect, however unconscious it may have been, by learning the art of weaving and by practising it assiduously. Then and then only will they understand the difficulties that professional weavers experience in weaving hand-spun yarn and be able to solve them.

Harijan, 31-3-'46

107

NO COMPULSION

A member suggested that the weavers should be required to weave a certain amount of hand-spun yarn and unless they did that the quota of mill yarn should not be given to them. Any kind of compulsion, replied Gandhiji, would only create a revulsion against Khadi. It would then cease to be the 'livery of freedom'. 'The spirit of independence is in the air. The weaver might well refuse to be compelled.'

'There is control in everything — food, cloth, etc.' argued Jajuji. Why cannot control be introduced with regard to weavers?'

'I do not like the idea,' replied Gandhiji. 'We do not use compulsion with regard to spinners. We cannot use it for weavers. Let us go to the root of the difficulty. Our initial mistake was that we took to spinning, but neglected weaving. If we had adopted universal weaving along with

spinning, all these difficulties would not have arisen. The remedy is to improve the yarn so that the weavers have as little difficulty in weaving as possible. We should reason with the weavers and explain to them that dependence on mill yarn must kill their avocation in the end. Mill-owners are no philanthropists. They would draw the noose tight round the handloom weavers' neck the moment they come within effective range of competition with mill cloth.

"If we have faith in the *charkha*, we must forge ahead undismayed by these temporary bottlenecks. The number of handlooms weaving hand-spun will increase in due course. We have got enough artisans and indigenous skill in our country to produce all the cloth that we require for ourselves."

Jajuji: "This means that the work must go on as before at snail's pace. Our scheme of making 4 lakhs of people self-sufficient in cloth in a short time in this way will not succeed."

Gandhiji: "If it does not, the fault will be ours."

Jajuji: "That is right in the ultimate sense. But circumstances also count."

Gandhiji: "It is man's privilege to overcome adverse circumstances. Is not conquest of nature the slogan of the age we are living in? If circumstances alone had counted, Germany and Japan would have won the war. Let us in this respect take a leaf out of the book of the English people who do not know what it is to admit defeat. We have to cultivate austerity and penance in our life. There is nothing that the power of penance cannot achieve."

Harijan, 20-10-'46

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